

Improvement of Clarinet Technique and Articulation with Etudes Nos. 2, 12, and 19 from Paul Jeanjean's *Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette*

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Abstract

In this study, etudes nos. 2, 12 and 19 selected from Paul Jeanjean's etude book *Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette* are examined in regards to their contribution to clarinet performance. It is observed that these etudes, which are commonly used in clarinet performance education, make many contributions to the musical and technical progress of clarinet students including, but not limited to, development of tonguing techniques in musical articulation, gradual acceleration of rhythmical movements of fingers on the keys, use of breathing techniques according to the musical phrase, learning of musical articulation forms such as staccato, legato, and accenting, and correct timing of performance of different note values within the measure. This study examines contributions of Paul Jeanjean's selected etudes to clarinet performance education within the framework of the musical elements mentioned above.

Keywords: Clarinet, Clarinet performance education, Etude.

1. Introduction

Etudes are works that are composed in order to improve both technical and musical skills of the player on their instrument, and to help them express musical elements. "Etude" is described as "The name that is given to mature research pieces which provide progression of instrument technique at an advanced level, while giving weight to musical values" (Say, 2002: p. 189-190).

Beginning from the first years of instrumental education, students are required to play etudes in order to help them overcome both musical and technical difficulties they might face in the repertoire. This type of etude study continues at all levels of instrumental education from beginning to advanced.

In instrumental pedagogy, reaching designated goals and habits with the use of etudes is a preferred and healthy way of teaching. In instrumental pedagogy, etudes are very important materials, which are specifically composed for every instrument and level. They play a very important role in solving technical and musical problems, and gaining skills of instrumental technique (Yalçinkaya, 2012: p. 32).

Throughout instrumental education, etudes are assigned to students considering their technical-musical progression, individual talent and perception at each stage, while gradually increasing the level of difficulty. Simultaneously, difficulty level of the repertoire also gradually increases. When the technical and musical difficulties of etudes and repertoire pieces progress in parallel, the etudes become very helpful tools in overcoming the difficulties in the studied repertoire. Regardless of their technical level and type, each etude, with its specific technical goals, is helpful in overcoming the challenges that the student can face in the pieces they play (Temiz, 2006: p. 398). However, although etudes are written as a basis to the repertoire, they can also include many musical and technical challenges within themselves. Practicing with technical and musical exercises geared towards these challenges would help the student both overcome these difficulties with more ease, and also reach a considerably higher level on their instrument.

It is important for the student to have a positive approach towards the etudes they practice. The student should have the understanding that the difficulties they face in the etudes can be overcome with specific exercises. This approach would help them dealing with the problems they may experience while performing etudes or repertoire pieces.

While studying an etude or a repertoire piece, the student should primarily examine musical elements such as articulation, phrasing, and rhythmical structure. This type of pre-study is necessary in order to bring forth the musical structure during performance. Ercan explains this approach:

When learning a new piece, it is a beneficial approach to start with summarizing structural and stylistic characteristics such as musical elements, form, and historical era the piece belongs to. Identifying the piece in terms

of musical elements, and the patterns that bring these elements together, would help the student to understand musical ideas in the piece and do simple analyses (Ercan, as cited in Kurtuldu, 2009: p. 29).

This approach would make instrumental education more effective and help prevent waste of time.

Below is a list of things the student should pay attention to while practicing or performing an etude:

- 1) Knowing the historical period etude is composed and its characteristics;
- 2) Relating stylistic characteristics of this period with musicality;
- 3) Observing the meter, and whether if it changes within the etude or not;
- 4) Observing the central tonal key of the etude, and whether if it changes within the etude or not;
- 5) Tempo indications at the beginning, their definitions, and changes in tempo (if any);
- 6) Knowing the definitions of dynamic markings and performing them correctly;
- 7) Insertion of breath marks according to the phrasing (this step should be taken once the student is able to play the etude at a reasonable level).
- 8) Musical articulation and performing them as indicated;
- 9) Marking the difficult parts of the etude and practicing these parts separately with a metronome if needed.

In this article, after giving brief information about Paul Jeanjean, etudes nos. 2, 12, and 19 from his *Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette* are examined as far as their musical and technical characteristics, and the difficulties students may encounter while practicing. Furthermore, strategies and sample exercises for overcoming these difficulties are suggested. The sample exercises are written in a way in which teachers can change or expand, according to the needs of individual student. It is advised that these exercises should be practiced with a metronome, in order to develop rhythmical accuracy.

2. Paul Jeanjean

Paul Jeanjean was a French composer, known primarily for his clarinet compositions. He lived between 1874 and 1928. His works for clarinet include *18 études de Perfectionnement*, *16 Etudes Modernes*, *Etudes Progressives et Melodiques*, *25 "Technical and Melodic Etudes," in 2 volumes*, *'Vade-Mecum' for the Clarinet Player*, *6 Special Studies*, *Au clair de la lune*, *Arabesques*, and *Clair matin*.

3. Etude No. 2

This etude is written in 3/4 meter, and marked *piu presto possibile* (as fast as possible) tempo. The tonal key is C major. Dynamic markings vary between *piano*, *mezzoforte*, and *forte*. The etude is written almost entirely in eighth and sixteenth note rhythmic values. Mainly, *legato* and *non-legato* articulations are used (lack of marking on the notes indicates *non-legato* articulation).

The section between measures 1 and 16 is written almost entirely in sixteenth notes. In every measure, the first four notes are *legato*, while the following notes are *non-legato* (see figure 1). Similarly, in sections from measure 41 to 48, and from measures 53 to 63, same rhythmic values and articulations are used.

Below is the section from measures 1 to 4, as an example to the sixteenth note passages mentioned above:



Figure 1. P. Jeanjean, *Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette*, Etude No. 2, measures 1 to 4

It may be challenging for the student to play these sixteenth notes equally, when *non-legato* articulation is used. In this kind of passages, it is particularly essential for the teacher to emphasize the importance of playing consequent notes on the same pitch equally. It should also be noted that, especially in high register, it is very important to be careful about keeping the tone color the same while using this articulation. It is advisable to

practice not only on the notes, rhythms, and articulations written, but also on different notes, rhythms, and articulations while keeping the tempo steady. A simple exercise, as suggested in figure 2, can be used in order to improve the desired skills. These types of exercises would help the student to play the notes equally with a steady tempo, while keeping the tone color consistent.



Figure 2. Sample exercise no. 1 for etude no. 2

In the second part of the etude, from measures 17 to 32, mostly eighth and sixteenth notes are used, and articulation is entirely *non-legato* (see fig. 3). Below is the section from measures 17 to 20 of the etude, as an example to these eighth and sixteenth note passages:



Figure 3. P. Jeanjean, *Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette*, Etude No. 2, measures 17 to 20

As in the first part, the student may have difficulty tonguing the notes equally using this articulation. In this situation, they can practice every challenging passage with different tempos, articulations, notes, and rhythms using a simple exercise as suggested in Figure 4. Same type of practice can be applied also in sections from measures 33 to 40 and 49 to 52, where, once again, *legato* and *non-legato* articulations are used.



Figure 4. Sample exercise no. 2 for etude no. 2

The *accent* in the last beat of measure 40, *fermatas* in measures 56 and 64, and the *rallentando* at the very end are important musical elements that should be observed carefully.

Etude No. 2 is specifically chosen in order to demonstrate teaching techniques for improvement of *non-legato* articulation and performance of this articulation at the correct beats of measures.

4. Etude No. 12

This *presto* (lively, very quick) etude is written in 2/4 meter and B minor key. In general, along with *mezzoforte*, and *forte* dynamics, half, quarter, eighth, and often sixteenth note values are used. Articulation types vary between *legato*, *non-legato*, *staccato*, and accents.

In the first section, from measures 1 to 16, sixteenth notes with *legato* articulation, and syncopations with eighth and quarter notes are used. Second notes of these syncopations are emphasized with accents. Additionally, in measures 13 and 14, there is a two-measure ascending chromatic scale (see fig. 5).



Figure 5. P. Jeanjean, *Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette*, Etude No. 12, mesures 1 to 16

The student should pay special attention to keeping equal note values and a warm tone quality while performing this kind of *legato* passages. Furthermore, in *legato* passages, the student should be asked to play the notes clearly without any additional middle notes being heard. This approach would help every note to be heard clearly and equally; as a result, it would make the passages smoother. In order to practice these elements, a separate exercise similar to the exercise suggested in figure 6 can be assigned to the student.



Figure 6. Sample exercise no. 1 for etude no. 12

Lastly, in order to bring out the technical and musical elements in this section, it is especially important to emphasize the accented notes clearly. The exercise below would help the student to practice emphasis of accented notes in syncopated rhythms in different dynamics and tempos (see fig. 7).



Figure 7. Sample exercise no. 2 for etude no. 12

The next section of the etude is between measures 17 and 32 (see fig. 8). In this section, the composer makes use of *legato* and *staccato* articulations as well as accents. The melodic and rhythmic structure of the first part of this section is same as the first part of the first section. However, different articulations are applied in this part. In the second part of the section, the melody begins to change. In the entire etude, the only long note is the half note B in measure 32.



Figure 8. P. Jeanjean, Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette, Etude No. 12, mesures 17 to 32

In order to practice the combination of *legato* and *staccato* articulations in succession, the sample exercise below can be used. This is the same exercise suggested for practicing the *legato* passages, written with *legato* and *staccato* articulations (see Fig. 9).



Figure 9. Sample exercise no. 3 for etude no. 12

In the next two sections from measures 33 to 56, and measure 81 to the end, same articulations and note values are used.

From measures 57 to 80, syncopations along with sixteenth and eighth notes continue to be used. Up to measure 56 of the etude, almost each measure begins with either a sixteenth or an eighth note. However, in this section, only eighth notes are used at the first beat of each measure. These eighth notes are usually followed by sixteenth notes in the second half of the first beats (see Fig. 10). In this part, the student should pay attention to the synchronization of tonguing with the notes, especially in between the slurs. Otherwise, each note that is played too soon or too late will disrupt the tempo.



Figure 10. P. Jeanjean, Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette, Etude No. 12, mesures from 57 to 68

Students are usually inclined to rush or slow down while playing the sixteenth and eighth notes with the given articulations in this etude. In this case, it is advisable for the student to practice these passages with a metronome, setting the beats for sixteenth or eighth notes. This sort of practice will enable students to gradually accelerate their fingering techniques while keeping rhythmical accuracy with a steady tempo. In these kind of passages in the etude, the student should pay special attention to the following elements: keeping the fingerings rhythmically accurate, keeping the *legato* passages clear by eliminating any middle notes that does not belong to the melodic structure, keeping the *staccato* notes short and on time, strong entrance to the accented notes, and coordination of all these elements with each other.

In this etude, *fermata* is used only at the end of measure 80. The last section after the *fermata* is the same as the beginning theme with different articulations and occasional change of notes.

Etude No. 12 is especially chosen for demonstration of teaching techniques for establishing performance of the mentioned articulations, and keeping the fingerings rhythmically accurate along with these articulations.

5. Etude No. 19

This etude is written in 6/8 meter with *non troppo lento* (slow but not much) tempo indication. In measure 49 of the etude, the tempo briefly becomes *più lento* (slower), then it returns to Tempo 1 after the *fermata* at the end of measure 51. The tonal key is G minor. Dynamics vary between *pianissimo*, *piano*, *mezzoforte*, and *forte*. As far as articulation, *legato*, *non-legato*, *staccato*, *portato*, and *tenuto* are utilized.

In the first section, from beginning to measure 16, eighth, quarter, dotted quarter, and dotted half note values are used. It is important to perform this section according to the indicated dynamics. In the first measure, *crescendo* and *decrescendo* is used within the *piano* dynamic; on the contrary, in the second measure, same *crescendo-decrescendo* movement is utilized in *forte* dynamic. Figure 11 shows measures 1 to 8 as an example to these dynamic changes. In addition, the section from measures 52 to the end of the etude is also important for performance of the mentioned dynamics.



Figure 11. P. Jeanjean, Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette, Etude No. 19, mesures from 1 to 8

While performing this and similar passages, the student should enter each note in a controlled way without accentuation. This practice would help the student achieve the warm and full sound color as well as unbroken musical phrases expected from them.

Although this etude is written in a slow tempo, the sixteenth and thirty-second notes, as well as sixteenth triplets shown in figures 12, 13, and 14, make rhythmical fingering and performance of mentioned articulations a difficult task.



Figure 12. P. Jeanjean, Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette, Etude No. 19, mesures from 25 to 28



Figure 13. P. Jeanjean, Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette, Etude No. 19, mesures from 41 to 44

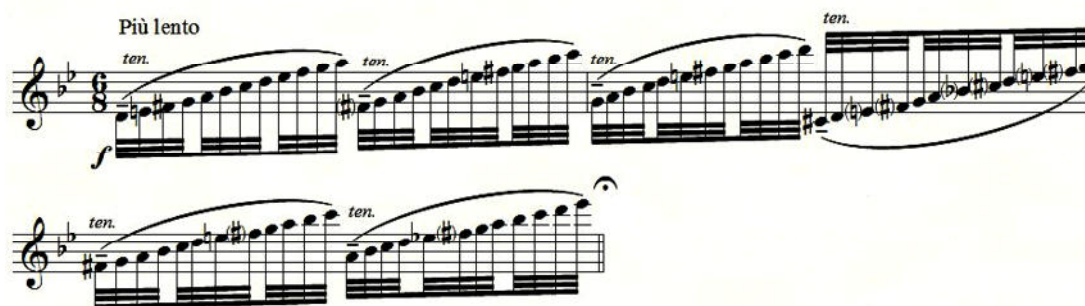


Figure 14. P. Jeanjean, Vingt Etudes Progressives et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette, Etude No. 19, mesures from 49 to 51

It is advisable for the student to practice difficult sections, such as the examples above, with a metronome after breaking them into smaller sections. This style of practice would allow the student to achieve equal and rhythmical fingering and articulation of the notes. In order to develop these skills, the students can use the sample exercises below written in sixteenth notes, thirty-second notes, and sixteenth triplets (see figures 15, 16, and 17).



Figure 15. Sample exercise no. 1 for etude no. 19

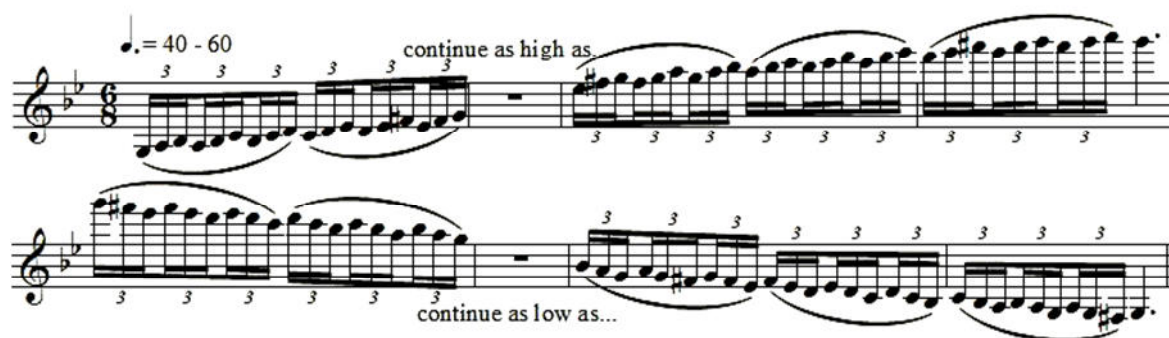


Figure 16. Sample exercise no. 2 for etude no. 19



Figure 17. Sample exercise no. 3 for etude no. 19

During performance of all three exercises suggested above, the student should pay attention to acquiring rhythmical fingering of the notes in given note values and articulations, as well as performing the dynamics accurately.

While performing different articulations in the etude, the student should use the appropriate tonguing technique. For instance, in *legato* playing, the tongue is used only at the beginning of the slurred passages; in *non-legato* playing, the tongue is used in order to separate the notes while keeping them long; and in *staccato* playing, the notes are tongued in such a manner that the notes should be short and dry. Awareness of this distinction would enable the student to bring out musical phrases more clearly in the etude.

The *fermata* at the end of measure 51 and in measure 70, and also the *rallentando* in measure 69 are important elements that should not be overlooked.

Etude no. 19 is specifically chosen in order to demonstrate teaching techniques for the performance of mentioned articulations together with indicated dynamics, and achieving a rhythmical fingering technique using these articulations.

6. Conclusion

After careful examination of etudes nos. 2, 12, and 19 from Paul Jeanjean's *Vingt Etudes Progressives Et Mélodiques Pour la Clarinette*, sections which may create technical and musical challenges to the students were determined. Then, technical exercises geared towards overcoming these difficulties were suggested. Together with these technical exercises, these etudes would greatly contribute improvement of clarinet performance.

Below are important points for overcoming the difficulties in each etude, and sections the student should pay attention to:

Etude No. 2: Performance of *non-legato* articulation, especially on sixteenth and eighth note values, on the correct time of the measures; playing the *non-legato* notes in high registers with a warm tone and maintenance of this tone throughout the etude.

Etude No. 12: Keeping every note rhythmically equal and performing them with a warm tone in sections with *legato* articulation; keeping the *legato* passages clear, without any middle notes appearing in the melodic structure; keeping the notes short, and playing them at the correct time of the measure, during performance of *staccato* articulation.

Etude No. 19: Keeping a consistent tone while playing the intervallic passages of the etude, and playing these sections with a warm and full sound; awareness of using different techniques for different articulation types, and being consistent while performing these articulation techniques; keeping the rhythmic accuracy while performing sixteenth notes, thirty-second notes, and triplets with the indicated articulations; paying attention to keeping the rhythmic structure and tempo consistent.

Even though, exercises are suggested for the challenges mentioned above, every teacher and student may have their own methods for overcoming these difficulties. In addition, students may respond differently to the challenges in these etudes; each may find a different set of challenges. Their personal self-discipline, perception, talent, and psychological state play an important role in overcoming these difficulties. Therefore, the suggested exercises are written in a flexible way.

Commonly, instrument lessons at the conservatories are individual lessons. For effective education and to avoid waste of time, it is important to tailor these individual exercises during the lessons towards each student's needs, considering their individual characteristics.

In this study, methods that can be followed during the clarinet student's individual practice sessions, and their lessons with the instructors are described. Furthermore, challenges that clarinet student may face while practicing and performing these etudes are explained, and exercises that can be used for overcoming these difficulties are suggested. It is believed that these exercises will not only be beneficial for today's clarinet students, but will also light the way for next generations.

7. References

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