

The Challenge is Musical

Preface to Théo Charlier, Study No.1

The individual titles within Théo Charlier's 36 Transcendental Studies hint at their many technical challenges: “Exercise for the third valve”, “Double tonguing” and the many interval studies. However, the real challenge of these etudes is musical. Part of the charm of this book is discovering the musical depth hidden within even the most mechanical etude.

Making a performance “more musical” is about more than stretching the time, exaggerating the dynamics or trying to capture an abstract emotion. Our musicality needs to come from what is on the page, and in Charlier's etudes this information can be overwhelming. This complexity can lead to the mistaken impression that we are having technical or mechanical problems when the real issue is one of comprehension, processing or expression.

To demonstrate this point in a fun way, here are a few “recomposed” passages from this book.

Example 1 – Etude No. 1, “De L'Articulation”, mm. 18-25. Here, a challenging passage is made easier by offsetting the rhythm. The issue is the conflict between accents (off the beat) and our automatic tendency to accent (or “pulse”) the strong beats.



Example 2 – Etude No. 2, “Du Style”, mm. 1-8 recomposed. In this example simpler key makes it easier to connect with its harmony and phrasing.



Example 3 – Etude No. 5, “De L'Articulation”, mm. 1-8 recomposed. Once change (moving the slurs) eliminates conflict between music and meter.



In all of these examples, both versions are roughly the same from a technical perspective. The recomposed passages *feel* easier because a challenge to our musician's ear. Interestingly, these changes have a drastic impact on the musical color. Without these key features helps us appreciate Charlier's choices and

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Laurent, Study No.1

Supplement to Charlier, Study No.1

Attack roundly so the notes sound full. Practice in 4 at first, then work up to 6

f

p

cen

ff *p* *cresc* *ff*

p

p



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Maxime-Alphonse, Study No.4

Supplement to Charlier, Study No.1

Sharply staccato. The notes marked with a straight line should be slightly prolonged.

Allegretto

p

The Charlier represents m
 expensive, it was usefu^l
 volumes: Arban, Sc^t
 A note reminds v
 when I had le^f

Shaw



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Articulation (*De l'articulation*)

Théo Charlier, Study No.1

Allegro (M. M. 108 to 120)

(*mf*) sans force

p

mf

p poco a poco crescendo

mf moins

f

mf

p crescendo

f

f

f

f



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¹ This s'

A Revelation

Preface to Théo Charlier, Study No.2

Students should be reminded to thoroughly observe Charlier's musical markings. For example, I have heard scores of players prepare the legendary Etude No.2, *Du Style*, but only a tiny minority observe the subtle "string" indication in bar 41. (In all honesty, I must include myself as guilty of this oversight in my early attempts!) Its importance became clear when Armando Ghitalla generously demonstrated the etude for me in a lesson. He began the *stringendo* where indicated, culminating with one beat per bar at bar 49. He held this tempo, gracefully gliding through the wide intervallic leaps of the following bars, only beginning to slow at the indicated *retenir* in bar 60. This was a revelation. This entire section of the piece came alive for me, simultaneously making it clear that a great deal of work was going to be necessary in the attempt to do justice to Charlier.

Years later, while studying at The Juilliard School, I eagerly anticipated the first that William Vacchiano would assign Charlier 2nd lesson. When the morning he paused for a moment, looked me in the eye, then knitted his brow. "It's like it is an old man giving a young man advice." He softly sang the *f* emphasizing each note with a gentle tug of an extended index finger.

Direct, concise stylistic advice that I will always remember.

Louis Ranger
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Emeritus Artist-Faculty, Aspen Music

Publisher's Note

Charlier called for a total
 suggests they be used
 them out over the +'



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Arban, Characteristic Study No.2

Supplement to Charlier Style Studies 2, 4, & 6

Legato

The musical score consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music is written in a legato style, with many notes beamed together and slurred. The score includes various dynamics such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte), and articulations like *do!* and *rall.* (rallentando). The key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb) in the fifth staff. A large watermark "www.hickeys.com" is overlaid diagonally across the middle of the page.



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Petit, Grand Study No.8

Supplement to Charlier Style Studies 2, 4, & 6

Moderato

A mon Elève ROBERT GURS
1st Prix du Conservatoire (1912)

p Bien chanté.

f

p

f

f

p

f

p

f

p

f

p



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Balay, Study No.13

Supplement to Charlier Style Studies 2, 4, & 6

(♩ = 80)

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in a single system. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/8. The piece begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a tempo marking of quarter note = 80. The first staff contains a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed eighth notes. The second staff continues this pattern with some accents. The third staff shows a change in dynamics to piano (*p*). The fourth staff features a dynamic shift to piano (*p*) and includes a fermata. The fifth staff has a dynamic shift to forte (*f*). The sixth staff is marked forte (*f*). The seventh staff is marked piano (*p*). The eighth staff is marked piano (*p*). The ninth staff is marked piano (*p*). The tenth staff is marked piano (*p*). A large watermark "www.hickeys.com" is overlaid diagonally across the middle of the page.



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Style (Du style)
Théo Charlier, Study No.2

Allegretto (M. M. 84 = ♩)



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