

# Melody Analysis and Performance Research Based on Liszt's Super-technical Etudes

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**Abstract:** Franz Liszt is a famous composer and performer in the romantic period of western music in the 19th century. He plays an important role in the field of piano. Liszt's piano playing skills greatly enrich the performance of the piano, and his improvisation ability is superb, so it has the title of "king of the piano". In Liszt's lifetime, he has created more than 800 music works, of which "Twelve Etudes of Super Skills" vividly highlights the characteristics of Liszt's melody creation. Moreover, Liszt's piano performance skills developed in super-technique Etudes have far-reaching guiding significance for piano teaching and performance. In this context, this paper analyzes the melody and performance of Liszt's super-technique Etude, and hopes to help the player to understand the connotation of the work and improve the playing skills.

## 1. Introduction

Born in Hungary, Franz Liszt was a famous composer and pianist of the 19th century Romanticism. He studied piano at the age of six and completed the first version of the Stunt Etude at the age of fifteen. The super-technical practice song consists of a total of twelve Etudes. These exercises have developed a simple finger-practice theme to a climax, which greatly enhances the piano skills based on the perfect interpretation of the player's emotions. Because Liszt's super-technical etudes have great influence on piano performance and teaching. In this paper, the melody and performance skills of Liszt's super-technical etudes are analyzed, hoping to provide a reference for the performers to understand and master the performance skills of super-technical etudes.

## 2. Melody analysis of super-technical Etudes

### 2.1 Pitch organization of melody

The pitch organization of melody is an important way to express melody, which is essential in Liszt's super-technical etudes. The pitch organization of melody can be divided into core tone, melody line, mode and tonality, etc. [1].

(1) Core tone: The main part of the melody is that the creation and development of the core tone can produce a beautiful melody. The third edition of the Ultra-Tech Etudes, which is now commonly used, has different melodic characteristics. It is precisely because the core sound is extracted from the first edition and adapted to create the classics we often hear at present. For example, as shown in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3, which are three different versions of the Super Skill Etude, we can clearly discover the development and changes of the melody through the spectrum. In the first version, the melody core sound is bB-D-F-A, and in the second version, the core sound adds three passes of G, E, and C, so the tension of the music has been greatly improved. The melody presents the characteristics of the lower level. In the third version, the melody sound is performed according to A-G-F, F-E-D, and D-C-B. The melody shows the characteristics of the column texture, and the coordination and the melody are more symphonic [2].



Fig.1. Super Skill Etudes First Edition Third Edition 1-4



Fig.2. The third version of the second version of the super skill etude



Fig.3. The third version of the third version of the super skill etude

(2) Melody line: The melody line is divided into positive wave type, inverted wave type, straight type, straight line type and straight line type [3]. In the super-technastic Etudes, different melody lines have different melody lines because of different melody, and different melody lines create a sense of music that is tense, witty, cheerful, or imposing. For example, in the first version of the third version of the Super Technique Etude, as shown in FIG. 4, at the 16th measure, the right-hand melody changes from the bass to the treble E and starts to fall again. There are five groups of curves of this kind of change. This kind of continuous wavy curve melody can easily bring people a tense sense of music. In the eighth song of the third edition of super-technical etudes, as shown in Fig. 5, the right-hand melody curve shows the characteristics of C-E-G-C-E-G straight running. Left-handed melody matches the chord, strength from weak to strong, the momentum of the melody line is constantly rising, it vividly reflects the exciting scene of hunting.



Fig.4. The first 15-23 section of the third edition of the super skill etude



Fig.5. The eighth version of the third edition of the super skill etude

(3) Modality and tonality: The super-technical etudes have experienced three periods of creation, adaptation and development. Liszt attaches great importance to the flexibility, variety, novelty and uniqueness of harmony melody, as well as the color change of musical instruments. He has also been trying to adapt and innovate the mode and tonality [4]. The tone of each super-technical Etude is very distinct and unique, so the emotions and atmosphere it expresses are also different. For example, in the super-technical Etudes Ghost Fire, the mode is major, the mode is B-flat, the gear-shaped melody makes the music sound full of minor atmosphere, that is, witty and agile, just in line with the theme.



Fig.6. Excellent Etudes Version 3, No. 5, Section 1-6

## 2.2 Diversified Use of Halftone in Melody Creation

In the super-technical Etudes, Liszt used semi-tones for his creations, which were mainly divided into motivational, connected, filled, and Toccata [5]. For example, as shown in Figure 7, the first "Prelude" of the third version of the Super Technique Etude is first decomposed, and then after the second measure, the left-handed melody begins to appear semitone. At the same time, after the fourth measure, the right-hand melody also began to display the chromatic scale. By decomposing the chords and the use of the semitones, the theme became clearer and clearer. This motivational semitoneization makes the music more dynamic and appealing. As shown in Figure 8, the eighth song Hunting in the third edition of the super-technical etudes uses the connecting mode when using the semitone, which spans four octaves. Here the use of semitone connection makes the chord of pinching strength eased, and paves the way for the melody behind, so that the audience is very looking forward to the music after. In the fourth Matepa of the third edition of Etudes for Special Skills, the filling semitone is used. As shown in Figure 9, the melody only revolves around octave, while the left hand uses semitone and chord. Although the semitone feature is not obvious, it still makes the music more colorful. In super-technical etudes, the use of tokata semitone pays more attention to texture type, because Liszt loves to use piano skills. Therefore, super-technical etudes are often challenging. As shown in Fig. 10, the Etudes in A minor belong to capriccio. Its remarkable feature is the continuous use of short time, because the tokata style is playing very fast, so its chromatic scale is very short [6].



Fig.7. The third version of the "Prelude" section 1-6



Fig.8. The third version of "Hunting"



Fig.9. The third version of Majupa



Fig.10. The third version of "a minor" section 15-17

### 2.3 Melody descriptive connotation

In the context of the romantic period, Liszt loved to describe the connotation and characteristics of his composition and composition through the "title" [7]. In the twelve super-technique Etudes, there are ten clear "titles", which means that these Etudes are not only boring piano skill exercises, but also emotional and connotative practice music, which is very high. Appreciation and performance value. The twelve super-techniques are mainly divided into: heroes of battle, romantic lyrics, humorous and natural scenery. In the case of war heroes, Liszt grew up in turbulent European society, especially the July Revolution in France, which had a great impact on Liszt's life. Liszt devoted himself to the creation of his music, such as Matepa and Hero, which belonged to the theme of fighting heroes. As shown in the 11 Mattepa fragments and the 12 Hero fragments, both of the etudes use an octave pillar texture in thematic melodies. This makes the tension of the melody rise dramatically, and the acoustical effect will bring the audience exciting feeling. In addition, through the use of PI and double tones, it also better highlights the heroic spirit, reflecting the fighting hero's indomitable and tenacious spirit.



Fig.11. "Majeta" fragment



Fig.12. "Hero" fragment

### 3. Super skill etude playing skills

The piano is like a Pandora's box with magical power, through which we can enjoy a colorful world. In the Romantic period, Liszt, under the influence of the trend of the times, integrated his personal feelings and music, and liked the piano skills under the influence of the romanticist. Therefore, in the second edition of super-technical etudes, the dazzling technical characteristics are very obvious, and the playing skills are also very complex. However, since the third edition, many complex playing techniques have been deleted, so there is today's commonly used version [8]. The following is a combination of the current version of our commonly used analysis.

#### 3.1 Line Playing of Melody

Melody is like the skeleton of a piece of music. Whether or not a clear melody can be played in a piece of music is crucial, and each of the super-technical etudes has its own main melody. When playing the melody line, the player can imagine it as an adult. Only when the logic is clear and clear, others can profoundly understand the thoughts and emotions you want to tell [9]. Pay attention to the following points:

(1) Reasonable breathing: Since music is alive, during the performance, the breathing and rhythm merge and the music will be smooth and beautiful. For example, when playing the "Hunting" section 116-123, as shown in Fig. 13, the switching port of the melody line is the inhalation place, and the last melody tone of the 117 bar is G. And the first melody of 118 bars is G. It's very reasonable to breathe in this place, but if you breathe between 116 bars and 117 bars, it will appear very urgent and the performer will show a tense appearance.

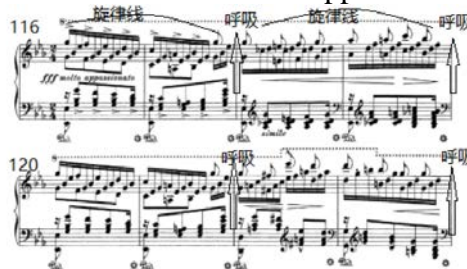


Fig.13. Sections 116-123 of Hunting

(2) Reasonable use of wrists and arms: When expressing melody, in addition to paying attention to the integration of breathing and music rhythm, we should also pay attention to the rational use of wrists and arms. In the course of performance, the performer should reasonably design the fluctuation of arms and wrists according to the melody of the music, for example, at the end of the first Prelude. As shown in Fig. 14, most of the music is fast scale running and arpeggio, and only the arm wrist can be properly matched with the music to perform smoothly, from bass to treble, and the arm gradually leaves the body. On the contrary, the arm should gradually return to the body, and then raise the arm in the place where it is breathing, so that the arm wrist is arranged to conform to the melody of the music and the law of body movement.



Fig.14. Prelude

### 3.2 Tone shaping

In the process of piano performance, in addition to the need to clearly express the main melody, the shaping of the timbre directly determines the quality of the music playing. The essence of the tone processing is to express the different notes through the fingers or wrists in combination with the music emotions. The range of strength of the piano is very wide. As a famous pianist in the Western Romantic period, Liszt used a lot of strengths in the creative process. From ppp to fff is a very common phenomenon. For example, as shown in Fig. 15, when playing the second Etudes in A minor, according to the music standards, we can know that the emotions expressed in this work are full of vigor and vitality. So from the beginning of the octave, we should play with the intensity of F. In order to make the sound clear and bright, we can relax our fingers and put down our wrists to highlight the stress effect.



Fig.15. Second 1-13

### 3.3 Rhythm control

Pitch and rhythm are important parts of the melody. The rhythm can give life to the music. With the rhythm, the music can be full of vitality and appeal. Liszt's super-technique Etude also uses a unique rhythm in emotional expression, so the friend controls the rhythm to better express the emotions contained in the super-technique. For example, in the "Hunting" section 38-45, which is in the development period of the music, as shown in Figure 16, the chords and the changes in the scales constitute a rhythm type. When playing a chord "↑↓", the arm falls and rises again. . Then play the following scales, and when the "↓→" is played, the arm falls and plays the rhythm of the next homeopathic play. When the melody phrase is finished, the arm is raised in the "↑".



Fig.16. "Hunting" Sections 38-45

To sum up, Liszt's super-technical etudes have gone through three versions, and the third edition is the most commonly used one. In terms of melody connotation, Liszt endowed different themes with different etudes through body rhythm, line direction and strength; in terms of performance skills, performers only breathe with the music. Reasonable arrangement of the wrist and arm, and pay attention to other piano playing skills, in order to give the music more color and expressive. In

addition, the author believes that when playing super-technical exercises, only profound understanding of the characteristics of the melody and the connotation of the melody. Think deeply about the details of the melody, and then use the colorful techniques to play the true super skill.

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