# A BOOK OF ÉTUDES

## KJELL SAMKOPF

# A WORKBOOK FOR VIBRAPHONE AND MARIMBA PLAYERS

PART III

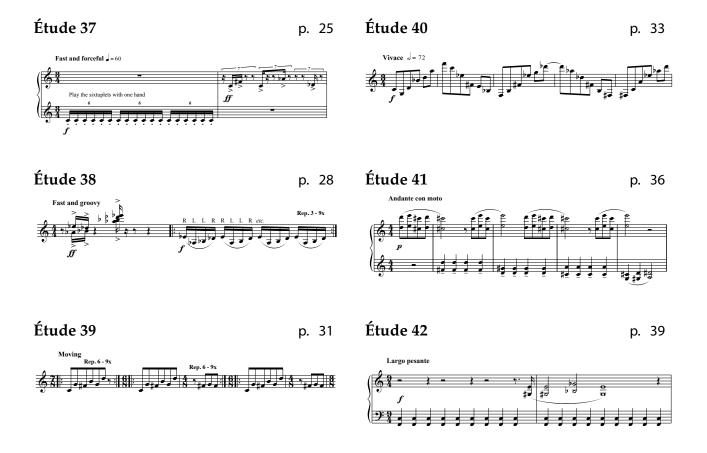
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### **Preface**

A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players is a project I have been working on for over 25 years. In the course of this time it has developed into an extensive series consisting of nine volumes aimed first and foremost at university and music academy students. However, the project addresses issues that vibraphone and marimba players will encounter throughout their professional career. Even though these workbooks were written with the classical performer in mind, there is much that is applicable to performers within any genre.

A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players is divided into three parts:

#### **PART I: A Book of Essays**

A collection of essays addressing central issues in the process of becoming a performing musician. Relevant to any academy music student, not just percussionists.

#### PART II: A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players

This part deals with the most important technical aspects of playing the marimba and vibraphone. Since this is such an extensive subject, this part is divided into five volumes:

Book 1: On Playing the Vibraphone and Marimba

Book 2: On Practicing Scales and Chords

Book 3: Basic Instrumental Technique I

Book 4: Basic Instrumental Technique II (tremolo)

Book 5: On Improvisation

#### **PART III: A Book of Études**

A collection of 45 études of which 18 are for solo marimba, 18 for solo vibraphone, and 9 that can be played on either instrument. In these 45 études the instrumental techniques discussed in Part II are put into a musical context. The studies comprise a theme and set of variations, in which all 45 movements together make up a unified whole. The total performance time for the 45 études is just over three hours.

The études are divided into three volumes:

Volume 1: 18 études for solo marimba (études 1 – 18)

Volume 2: 18 études for solo vibraphone (études 19 – 36)

Volume 3: 9 études for solo marimba or solo vibraphone (études 37 – 45)

The 9 études of Volume 3 cover all central elements of vibraphone and marimba performance technique, including linear passages, intervals, chords, tremolo, large leaps and polyphony. As well as comprising Part III of **A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players**, **A Book of Études** is also an independent work in its own right. A performance would normally consist of a selection of some of the movements, although the entire work with all 45 movements can be played.

**A Workbook for Vibraphone and Marimba Players** is based on more than 25 years' experience of teaching at college level. Without this experience I would not have been able to write these books. I would therefore like to extend my thanks to all of my students during these years. Without you these books would never have been written.

I would also like to thank the 33 musicians who each took it upon them to learn one or two of the études, who gave the first performance of the work, and who made the first recording of it possible. Your efforts and contribution were vital in clarifying the notation and performance instructions, and in preparing the final version of the études.

**A Book of Études** could not have been written without financial support. I would like to thank The Composers' Remuneration Fund, TONO, and Arts Council Norway, who, through the various grants they offer, made the composition of this work possible.

Finally I would like to say a special thank you to my wife Caroline Ho-Bich-Tuyen Dang who helped with the design and layout and otherwise assisted me in every way.

Kjell Samkopf Oslo, 2014

### Introduction

Études – studies – are not written first and foremost for an audience, but for a performer; they are the music of musicians. An étude is a piece of music that focuses on a particular theme or has a specific purpose, usually related to a technical issue in performance or composition. Études are intended to help the performer develop their skills, both with regard to motor and muscular control, mental ability and intellectual insight. Thereafter an étude should serve as material for general maintenance throughout a performer's career. An étude demonstrates the possibilities of the instrument, and often pushes boundaries in this respect.

Throughout the history of music many composers such as Clementi, Debussy, Chopin, Bartok, Kreisler, Paganini, Liszt and Ligeti have devoted special attention to the étude. The most famous example is nonetheless Bach's Inventions – intended just as much as an introduction to composition technique as set of studies in keyboard technique.

Composing études is a challenging task. It requires in-depth knowledge of the instrument, and the composer's craftsmanship is of particular importance. Similarly, learning an étude is a challenging task for a musician. A well-written étude requires its performer to bring to balance their intellect, emotions and entire motor apparatus in order to give the best possible performance. A good étude will provide a musician with a musical and technical challenge for life. There is always room for improvement.

#### A Book of Études

A Book of Études consists of 45 études. The pieces do not increase in difficulty (i.e. the collection does not begin with the easiest and end up with the hardest) – each etude addresses a specific technical element such as scales, linear passages, arpeggiated chords and block chords, tremolo, and polyphony.

The études are structured according to the 9 elements of marimba technique. These 9 elements are a way of separating and explaining marimba and vibraphone technique based on musical structure and motor complexity. Different musical structures require different patterns of movement. These can be classified according to which and how many muscle groups are needed in order to execute the various different combinations of strokes. The 9 elements of marimba technique are explained in Book 1 *On Playing the Vibraphone and Marimba*.

The études are organised according to the 9 elements of marimba technique as follows:

Études for:	Element 1	Element Element 2 3		Element 4	Element 5	Element 6	Element 7	Element 8	Element 9
	One note	Groups of 2 - 5 notes	Scales and lines	Chords in arpeggio	Intervals	Chords in block	Tremolo	Big leaps	Polyfony
Marimba	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Vibraphone	19	19 20 21		22	23	24	25	26	27
	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
Vibraphone or marimba	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45

Each étude concentrates on one of these elements but contains contrasting passages and other elements in order to create a balanced form. Each étude is a complete piece in its own right.

#### Set of variations

A Book of Études is a set of variations in 45 movements, in which all the movements together make up an entire work. This is not a set of variations in the sense of a theme with ensuing variations, but a work in which all of the movements are based and constructed on a common fundamental material. This material is twofold, consisting of the sentence Semper idem, sed non eodem modo, and nine rows of 61 or 37 numbers following the pattern of Marcel Duchamp's Musical Erratum.

The sentence *Semper idem, sed non eodem modo* translates as "Always the same, but never in the same manner." Converted into a row of numbers, it looks like this:

S	E	M	P	E	R	I	D	E	M	,	S	E	D	N	О	N	E	О	D	E	M	M	О	D	0
1	5	4	7	5	9	9	4	5	4		1	5	4	5	6	5	5	6	4	5	4	4	6	4	6

Translated into pitches, it becomes:



The idea for Musical Erratum is borrowed from Marcel Duchamp. While working on his most famous project *The Bride stripped bare by her Bachelors, even*, in 1913, Duchamp constructed a technical device that produced random pitches. He imagined that this might be the starting point for a new kind of musical alphabet. The device consisted of 89 numbered balls in a vase. There was a hole in the vase beneath which would pass a model train pulling several trucks; as the trucks passed the opening, balls would fall into the trucks. Because the speed of the train varied, there would fall a different number of balls into each truck. When the vase was empty, Duchamp wrote down the result, converting the numbers to pitches on the designated instrument.

I have used this idea to create one of the two the basic sources of material in *A Book of Études*. I did not use a model train, but instead made a set of 61 cards (corresponding to the number of notes on a five-octave marimba). I placed the cards in a basket and pulled out nine different random sequences of 61 numbers. From these nine rows I derived a new set of nine number rows consisting of 37 numbers (corresponding to the number of notes on a three-octave vibraphone).

This material appears in all the études, in ever-changing variations. The number rows were used to determine fundamental musical parameters such as pitch, note length, dynamics and texture, and other elements including time signature, interval relationships, chords, formal sections, and more. The sentence *Semper idem, sed non eodem modo* is used motivically, thematically and melodically throughout, and is an audible, structural element of nearly all the études.

#### Performance

Études are something a musician usually works on alone in a practice room, and are not first and foremost intended as concert music. *A Book of Études* can nonetheless be performed on stage.

A usual procedure would be to play an excerpt of the work, selecting a number of études. How many, which ones and in which order is up to the performer. It is however desirable that the work also be performed in its entirety. This can be done with one, two or more performers. When the whole work is performed, the movements can be played in any order.

The total performance time of all 45 études is a little over three hours.

### **Notation**

The notation in *A Book of Études* alternates between precise and open. Some études do not have tempo indications and also lack dynamics. In other études each single stroke is defined with regard to dynamic, attack point and stroke angle.

In general, however, the notation is relatively open and without too much detail. This is in order to give the performer room for choice in interpretation and style of playing, and to inspire performers to come up with their own solutions to particular challenges. Several of the études can be played in a number of different ways, and thereby present a variety of musical and technical challenges.

Where there are no performance instructions, it is left for the performer to decide.

#### Accidentals

Conventional rules for the use of accidentals apply. This means that an accidental is valid only at the specified octave, and for the duration of the rest of the bar in which it appears. In certain cases natural signs are used to clarify and avoid any possible doubt.

#### Note lengths

Both the marimba and the vibraphone are percussion instruments where focus is on the attack rather than the cut off of the note. For the marimba the end of the note is given little attention and is usually left to die out naturally. It is not common to dampen notes on the marimba, and at faster tempi it is not practicable. For the vibraphone the situation is somewhat different since the bars reverberate for longer, and all the bars can be dampened simultaneously with the pedal or individually with the mallets.

The extent to which a note is notated with an eighth- or a sixteenth-note is in many cases more an indication of a suggested way of playing the note than it is an exact indication of the note's length. In some cases choice of note-length has been determined by general legibility of the music.

#### **Dynamics**

The following 8 dynamic indications are used: ppp - pp - p - mp - mf - f - ff - ff

**ppp** and **fff** define the outer limits of the dynamic range.

Dynamic signs can be interpreted in two ways. In some cases they are simply an indication of volume: **ff** is louder than **f**, and softer than **fff**. This is a style of interpretation we rely on when playing serial music. In other instances dynamic signs can also give an indication of musical expression, usually in relation to the Italian meaning of the words the signs represent: **piano** indicates quiet, calm, slow, whereas **forte** is often taken to mean powerful, loud, hard, fast. The context will determine which of these meanings is most appropriate.

#### Sound – timbre

Choice of mallets and sound/timbre in general is up to the performer.

In certain études the point and angle of attack is specified. The difference in timbre generated by variations in point and angle of attack is, however, dependent on the type of mallet used. Where angle and point of attack are specified it is not the timbre itself that is important, rather that the performer concentrates on an awareness of the resultant timbre. The notation is intended to encourage an extended palette of timbral nuances rather than indicate a specific timbral spectrum.

## 

A percussive accent has a marked attack, the focus is on the attack itself: the start of the note. A pressure accent is softer since the intention is to emphasise the entire duration of the note.

- $m{\circ}$  is a strong, marked percussive accent normally used in the context of loud dynamics from  $m{f}$  to  $m{fff}$  .
- is a distinct, percussive accent and is found throughout the whole dynamic range.
- is a mild, percussive accent. It is derived from the staccato sign (in other contexts it would mean stacatissimo) and indicates a short, accentuated note. It is used mainly within the softer dynamic range.
- is a pressure accent normally used with softer dynamics. It is related to the tenuto sign and indicates a sustained, accentuated note.

In addition to the accent signs above, the following indications for accents are also used: sf(sforzando), f(z) (forzando) and sf(z) (sforzando).

sf is a frequently encountered accent (equivalent to > ) and is used across the entire dynamic range from ppp to f.

 $f_z$  is a stronger accent (equivalent to  $^{\land}$  ) and is used from mf to f.

sfz is a very strong accent (equivalent to  $\frac{\Lambda}{r}$  ) and is used from mf to f.

These accents can be reinforced by adding further fs: sff, sfffz etc.

Accent signs and indications apply for the most part to individual notes and only rarely to groups of notes.

#### **Articulation signs**

Articulation signs usually refer to groups of notes.

The following articulation signs are used: staccato  $\dot{r}$  and tenuto  $\bar{r}$ .

Articulation signs can be combined with slurs:



When slurs are combined with articulation signs, such as staccato signs, the result might seem illogical: the notes are apparently to be played legato and staccato at the same time, which is not possible. However, this particular form of notation can be interpreted as an indication that the notes should be separated, while the slur indicates that the notes belong together as a unity.

When a slur is combined with tenuto signs, it might seem like tautology. However, the tenuto signs can be interpreted as pressure accents indicating that the notes should be played legato, with a certain sustained accentuation.

Slurs and articulation signs can be combined in many different ways to indicate different nuances of texture or timbre rather than a specific style of execution.

The deadstroke is a special type of stroke, indicated with a cross above the note ( • ).

#### Notation of tremolo

Tremolo is usually notated with three lines through the stem of the note (  $\mathcal{I}$  ). This does not give any indication of the speed of the tremolo, which is left up to the performer to decide.

For those instances where the speed of the tremolo is specified (for example in études 1 and 7), the following indications are used:

VS very slow S slow M medium F fast VF very fast

In passages where all notes are to be played tremolo the indication roll all notes is used. This does not usually apply to grace notes, however.

In cases where a mandolin roll is preferred, this is indicated with mandolin roll.

It is left to the discretion of the performer to use tremolo on notes where it is not specified, according to musical and interpretational preference.

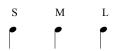
#### **Tempo indications**

For the most part, conventional Italian tempo indications are used. In addition tempo indications of the kind Fast, Very fast, Not too fast etc. are used. In some cases a metronome indication has been suggested in parentheses. For some of the études a specific metronome tempo has been indicated.

Where there is no tempo indication, choice of tempo is up to the performer.

#### Stroke angle

Stroke angle is indicated with the following three signs:



S small (0° - 25°)
M medium (c. 25° - c. 45°)
L large (c. 45° - c. 65°)

See Book 1 for an explanation of stroke angle.

c

#### Attack point

Where attack point is specified, the following three signs are used:



n node oc off center

center

See Book 1 for an explanation of attack point.

#### Glissando

A glissando is notated with a thin line from the starting note to the end note:



Brackets around either the starting note or the end note indicate that the note should not be struck.

The speed of the glissando is not specified.

#### Rubbing

Rubbing is used in étude no. 34 for vibraphone. Rubbing is not used in any of the marimba études.

Rubbing is a variant of glissando whereby the mallet heads do not strike the bars, but are drawn lightly across them in a rhythmic back-and-forth motion. See Book 3 for an explanation of this technique.

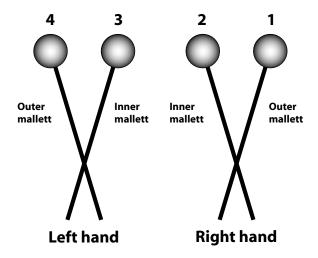
Rubbing is notated by indicating the interval at which the mallet heads should be held, and the pitches which should be rubbed between.



The notation should not be taken too literally, and should be taken as an indication of a textural quality.

#### Mallet numbering

The following mallet numbering is used:



Left and Right are used to indicate left hand and right hand in the music.

Several of the études can be played with either two or four mallets.

Sticking is rarely specified, and is left up to the choice of the performer. Sticking is, however, often indicated in the notation itself. Different kinds of notation are used to clarify musical structure and thematic and motivic material, and to improve legibility. Sticking indications that are suggested in the notation are intended as a guide.

## **Performing instructions**

The études in this volume can be played on both vibraphone and marimba, and are therefore all notated within a three-octave range from F3 – F6. It is possible to transpose single notes and phrases up or down an octave in order to adapt the music to an instrument with a wider range. This is not suggested in the music, but left to the discretion of the performer.

The performer is strongly encouraged to find several different interpretations and ways of playing each étude. By constantly seeking new and different solutions the études will serve as an inexhaustible source of improvement and musical and technical development.

#### Étude 37

Element 1: One note.

In this étude you are to focus on single notes. A particular challenge in this piece is the rapid repetition of single notes in the left hand. The intervals from measure 22 should preferably be played with just one hand. Be precise with your attack point, and make sure that you produce a good tone on every note.

#### Étude 38

Element 2: Groups of 2 – 5 notes.

This is a minimalistic étude built up of repetitive four-note figures. It is also an exercise in double sticking, and the entire étude is intended to be played using this technique. You should keep a steady tempo throughout, and try to maintain good rhythmic drive. You can create textural and dynamic nuances as you choose.

#### Étude 39

Element 3: Scales and linear passages.

This étude consists of a repetitive line that expands gradually. Each repetition is repeated a number of times, giving the étude a meditative character. Try to maintain a contemplative calm throughout. In the final section the repetitive line appears in retrograde form.

#### Étude 40

Element 4: Chords in arpeggio.

This étude consists of chords in arpeggio in alternating ascending and descending motion. A particular challenge here is that the chords are in places widely spaced. The étude can be played with two or four mallets, which will present the performer with differing technical challenges.

#### Étude 41

Element 5: Intervals.

This étude focuses on intervals. Be precise with your attack point, and be sure to produce a good tone on both notes of the interval. Try to achieve a good relation between each hand in the final part where the left hand plays broken intervals and the right plays the intervals as chords. There are no dynamic markings, which leaves room for the performer's own interpretation.

#### Étude 42

Element 6: Chords in block.

This étude has a religious character in the form of a hymn. Try to maintain stillness throughout. Be sure to strike all the notes of the chord simultaneously. Be sure of your attack point on each bar to produce a homogenous sound throughout each chord. Try to achieve a large, powerful sound. Attempt an even diminuendo from measure 13 to 43. The étude may be transposed down one octave when played on the marimba.

Element 7: Tremolo.

The primary focus in this étude is on mandolin roll and use of the bow. It is also a study in tone and textural nuance. Take time to let the bars ring, while at the same time bringing out the thematic material. The middle section presents a challenge in playing fast tremolo. This requires a controlled high speed in the tremolo.

#### Étude 44

Element 8: Big leaps.

This étude consists of abrupt and split up figures and individual chords, without any apparent relation. This fragmentary piece is full of contrasting elements and presents many technical challenges, particularly chords in big leaps that require large and rapid movements. Try to give each section a distinctive, individual character.

#### Étude 45

Element 9: Polyphony.

This is the final étude of the collection. It is built up of all the thematic material, both in its original form and in inversions, varied in a number of ways. In order to make these elements clear and audible it is necessary to weight the relationship between the hands throughout. The étude makes considerable demands on your ability to play independent lines in right and left hand. There is no tempo indication and there are no dynamic markings, giving plenty of room for the performer's interpretation.









## Marimba or Vibraphone

#### Andante con moto



### Marimba

### Largo pesante









## Vibraphone



