

ETUDE #1

After considering the information presented in the Foreword, I would now like to discuss the practical application of those music elements to a given composition. I have developed the following observations and interpretations throughout my years of performing and teaching; however, they do not preclude other interpretations. One of the greatest aspects of music is that no two performances are ever exactly alike. Listening to different recordings of classical symphonies by different conductors makes this evident. One factor, however, that should remain constant is the markings indicated by the composer in the score. The opening of Etude #1, for example, should begin with a loud dynamic and immediately *decrescendo* within two measures—how loud the performer begins and how much *decrescendo* is made is not always constant.

Another variable is tempo. Even though there are metronome markings for each Etude, every performer finds a comfortable tempo that may be faster or slower than indicated. Precision, sensitivity, and musicality, however, should not be sacrificed for speed.

Thematic material becomes obvious as these Etudes are studied. As I composed these pieces, I tried to write musically for the snare drum and included the same musical characteristics found in sonatas for violin, flute, etc. The idea of using rhythmic themes, therefore, became an important aspect when composing these etudes. The performer should be aware of thematic material and allow the themes to project.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. The opening measures present the rhythmic theme, which repeats in the second measure of line 6 and, again, in the last line. It should be heard as the beginning of a section each time this theme returns; therefore, the *ff* marking must be the loudest dynamic. The preceding accents should not be as loud as the statement of the theme.
2. The second measure of line 3 begins a series of three, two-measure phrases. Each two measures should be at a different dynamic level without a *decrescendo*.
3. All written accents should be noticeably louder than non-accented notes. The accents preceding each theme should also have a driving effect as they lead into the theme.
4. Use the center of the snare drum head for all loud playing and the edge of the head for all soft playing. When playing near the edge, the sticks should be over the snare bed.

INTERPRETATIONS:

1. The opening *decrescendo* should go from a *fortissimo* level to a *piano* level and then return to the *mezzo forte* at the third measure, increasing the effectiveness of the *decrescendo*.
2. The following *crescendo* into line 2 could be louder than a *fortissimo*; if it is, the *subito pp* will be more exciting. Remember, move quickly to the edge of the head for the *subito pp*.
3. The *pianissimo* in line 2 should not be softer than the triple *piano* in line 4.
4. There is no indication in line 8 explaining how soft to make the *diminuendo*. My interpretation is that it should decrease in sound until it can no longer be heard.
5. The series of loud and soft dynamics in line 10 should all be played in the center of the head. When a player moves too quickly between the center and edge of the head, the sound's quality changes very rapidly and the result is in poor taste.