

# Inside the Treasure Chest

## *Exploring rare pieces for piano each issue with Daniel Johnson*

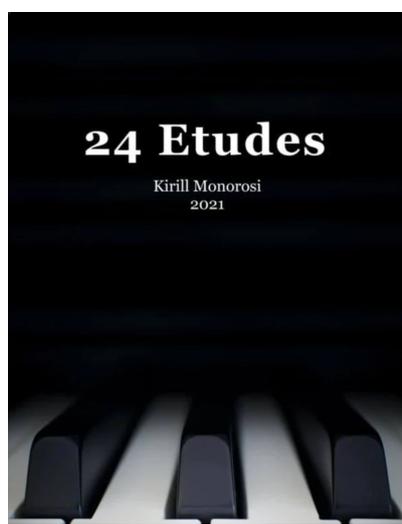
Believe it or not, this is a true story.

The scene is a local eisteddfod where some of my students were competing. One of them was performing the Etude in G major Op. 91 No. 2 (Grade 6) by Moszkowski, and the other was playing the Etude in G major Op. 91 No. 7 (Grade 7) by the same composer. Both students were prepared and played well, and I believed at least one was going to get a prize. To my shock, no places were awarded to either competitor. When we received the adjudication comments, we read:

“This etude is not suitable for competition” and on the other “Reconsider your repertoire choices for competitions. Try to avoid ‘student’ etudes.” No further detail was given!

There is an element of truth to the brittle comments in so far that the etudes Op. 91 by Moszkowski are, indeed, student centric. Compared to his other, more formidable and sophisticated *Virtuosic Etudes Op. 72*, the Op. 91 are harmonically simpler and less demanding, sitting comfortably at the grade 5-7 mark and quietly enjoying their place on exam lists. However, when reading each of the studies, it becomes clear that this adjudicator may have been a little too hasty when penning the above remarks.

Anybody who has performed anything by Moszkowski can safely assume that he wanted performers to enjoy what they were playing both physically and aurally. It was, after all, the great Paderewski who said: “after Chopin, Moszkowski best understands how to write for the piano, and his writing embraces the whole gamut of piano technique.” This remark is not by any means superfluous. One play-through of famous works like *Entinzelles*, *La Jongleuse*, or the equally buoyant *Tarantelle* from Op. 77, demonstrate that Moszkowski had an innate knowledge of the human hand, so much so that he could make the most treacherous of passages seem ‘easy’. The same musical and technical principles found in the Op. 91 are also present in a new collection of 24 Etudes by Dr. Kirill Monorosi, albeit at a much more detailed and advanced level. What is important is that both composers seem to have the same goal in mind: a pianistically enjoyable development of musicality as technique.



## The 24 Etudes of Kirill Monorosi:

The *Rising Stars* program is a course for advanced musicians that operates through the Open Academy at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Monorosi and colleagues teach the young pianists from the program for whom this collection is dedicated. The publication comes with a written preface by the composer as well as detailed notes on each etude contained at the back of the book. The notes are a highlight, illuminating some of the forms, harmonies, interpretive hurdles, and history behind each work.

When analysing the etudes, the presence of Bach is immediate and resounding (Monorosi himself being a notable Bach performer and musicologist) whilst also paying homage to composers such as Chopin, Liszt, and Scarlatti. Atop some of the studies are the words ‘inspired by’, however, Monorosi is quick to note that this simply represents a ‘*reflection or echo of their music that stayed with me from the years of studying, playing, and teaching their works*’ rather than a direct ‘composed in the style of’. My goal today is to take you through just a few of these appealing works, hopefully encouraging you to delve deeper into the set. I had the pleasure of sitting with concert pianist Mark Hooper and enjoying a sight read through some of the pieces, being charmed by their lyricism and, in some instances, their pleasing humour, like the *Etude in F-sharp major*:

Etude in F-sharp major  
inspired by D. Scarlatti

Kirill Monorosi

The image shows a musical score for 'Etude in F-sharp major' by Kirill Monorosi, inspired by D. Scarlatti. The score is written for piano in treble and bass clefs, 3/8 time signature, and F# major key. It is marked 'Allegro' and includes dynamic markings of forte (f), mezzo-piano (mp), and mezzo-forte (mf). The score features various fingerings and a 'Ped simile' instruction at the bottom.

*Eg. ‘Inspired by Scarlatti’ with a gentle harmonic ‘nod’ to Czerny Op. 740 No. 4*

There are studies in texture, form, and structure, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> etude in C# minor titled *Etude in the form of Variations*:

Etude in C-sharp minor  
Etude in the form of Variations

Kirill Monorosi

The image shows a musical score for 'Etude in C-sharp minor' by Kirill Monorosi, titled 'Etude in the form of Variations'. The score is written for piano in treble and bass clefs, 4/4 time signature, and C# minor key. It is marked 'Adagio cantabile e espressivo' and includes dynamic markings of mezzo-forte (mf) and piano (p). The score features various fingerings and a 'Ped simile' instruction at the bottom.

*Eg. Bach and Schumann are present for this beautiful theme that is then transformed over three variations.*

There is a focus on imitative and polyphonic playing:

Etude in D major

Kirill Monorosi

Allegro energico

5.

*Eg. A sparkling imitation and coordination study. My favourite study of the set and a great warm up before practice.*

Etude in F minor - Fugue

inspired by J. S. Bach

Kirill Monorosi

Allegro

12.

*Eg. The fugue as etude. A somewhat diabolical theme!*

Of the more melancholic etudes, there is the beautiful etude in 6ths inspired by Chopin:

Etude in B-flat minor

inspired by F. Chopin

Kirill Monorosi

Andante e rubato

mp

Ped. simile

rit.

simile

*Eg. A challenging study with many bases covered such as melody, double note playing, phrasing, and balance of sound.*

Virtuosity is never far behind in this collection, with two studies being inspired by Liszt and Paganini:



*Eg. Etude No. 17 in A flat Major: all manner of octave playing on display here.*



*Eg. Etude on a theme of Paganini – some anticipatory acrobatics required!*

It is unfortunate that there is not enough space in today's article to speak about all 24 etudes. This is a significant collection of studies and one that deserves wider recognition. Whilst Monorosi stays within the frameworks of traditional harmonic language, this in no-way diminishes the pedagogical appeal of the works. Like Moszkowski, he understands the advancing student, their hands, and how best to navigate the piano keys in a musically and physically appealing way. Aside from being worthy concert works, these studies are interesting introductions to styles and characteristics found in some of the most demanding advanced repertoire. For students who are moving across the higher grades or post grade 8, diploma level performance, I cannot recommend this publication highly enough. I hope you enjoy playing them as much as I have.

As for the adjudicator from the beginning of today's article, I am certain he would enjoy these, too!

All the etudes have been professionally performed by the talented students from the Rising Stars program. They can be viewed in their entirety by following the below link to the playlist. This is inspirational playing by some of Australia's youngest, most talented pianists: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYymRICHVoQ&list=PLSFHNq95NCPlk5rAo9jCAIqFxd0-3VVj4>

To purchase the 24 Etudes, please follow this link: <https://motm.com.au/products/24-etudes-by-kirill-monorosi>

### **References:**

Monorosi, K. (2021). *24 Etudes*. Sydney. La Folia Music publications  
Sydney Conservatorium of Music (2023) *Dr. Kirill Monorosi* Available at: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/music/about/our-people/academic-staff/kirill-monorosi.html>  
(Accessed: 20 March 2023)

### **Dr. Kirill Monorosi**

Monorosi currently serves on staff at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. He is active as researcher, lecturer, pianist, and is one of the mentors for the gifted pianists studying within the Rising Stars Program through the conservatorium's Open Academy. His list of accolades is extensive and far too numerous to mention in this article. I encourage you to read further here:

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/music/about/our-people/academic-staff/kirill-monorosi.html>



*Daniel Johnson (BMUS, MMUS, AMUSA, DipRSM) is a pianist, pedagogue, AMEB examiner, QMTA Mentor and QMTA Committee Member. His passion is Australian piano music, repertoire, and teaching materials for advanced students. He operates the Artistry Labs, which is a private piano studio in Bardon, QLD, and is the Artistic Director of the Marilyn Meier Chopin Award, launching in 2024. [www.danieljohnsonpianist.com](http://www.danieljohnsonpianist.com)*