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TEN AMERICAN
CELLO ETUDES



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Ten American Cello Etudes

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INTRODUCTION

The popularity of the cello is rising, yet its role and repertory remain limited. Despite attempts to use the cello in popular music, no one has yet attempted to bring popular musical currents into music for study by all cellists.

These etudes are not intended as a replacement for the traditional ones. In fact, it is assumed that anyone on a level able to play them has a familiarity with the traditional etudes. This music is intended to reinforce traditional technique and to expand it, through the recovery of old traditions.

One of these traditions, common in Bach's time, but nearly lost since then, is improvisation. Many of the "American Cello Etudes" were born out of improvisation; by extracting and studying their various musical and technical ideas, one can expand them and create new improvisations. Also, since some of these etudes use standard popular forms, a study of their harmony and structure will prove helpful.

Another neglected tradition is chordal playing. Traditionally, chords have been used at the beginnings and endings of cello pieces. There are even short passages—in Haydn's music, for example—where the cello plays patterns of alternating bass notes and chords. This type of playing has not been fully developed. The cello can play chords consistently throughout a piece, even acting as a rhythm instrument. Syncopation, strumming, pizzicato, and harmonics are also areas open for exploration.

These etudes, however, are not only vehicles for the study of technique: they are also suitable for recitals, either as small sets or as encores. Rooted in tradition, they speak of a new chapter in the life of the cello.

The history of music is full of composers who were able to bend music to reflect their time period and country. In this century, musicians in the jazz, pop, and contemporary fields have taken instruments such as the saxophone, the drums, the bass, and the guitar, and given them a new sound reflecting modern times. Yet the cello, with its wide range, variety of colors, and wonderful capacity for counterpoint, remains an underestimated instrument, assigned a dignified yet restricted role in today's musical world. This book will inspire cellists to help our instrument assume a more central position in popular musical culture, thereby increasing public interest in its traditional repertory and, most important, insuring its continuation as a viable musical instrument which participates fully in changing musical currents.

One final note: though these etudes are meant to be taken seriously, do not take them *too* seriously. They are meant to be fun. Who says learning technique has to be dull? Enjoy!

I would like to thank my family, friends, and teachers for their support and help, with a special word of gratitude to David Wells.

A.M.


PERFORMER'S NOTES

No. 1. There is a tradition of music meant to sound like a train, and this etude is in that tradition. Though simple in sound, it is based on the use of thirds, fourths, fifths, arpeggios, string crossings, and perpetual-motion bowing.


Some special notational devices have been used:

(See p.2, l.1, m.3): 

Placed over or under quarter-notes, this means play on the string with a slight release of pressure between notes.

(See p.2, l.5, m.1): 

Placed over or under eighth-notes, this means play on the string, but somewhat off; technically, it is between spiccato and detache.

(See p.2, l.7, m.1): 

In this context, the eighth-notes should be played off the string; lean on the first eighth-note. Play the staccato close to the string.

(See p.2, l.7, m.1): Chords should be played in arpeggio, but fast enough to sound solid

No. 2. Here, chord scales and inversions are explored. The middle section uses unusual bowings, such as alternating-string technique similar to that of the classical guitar, and arpeggiated bowings. I have combined a southern blues feeling with suspensions in the Baroque style. Don't overdo the accents! Keep the consecutive dotted notes very close to the string.

No. 3. This etude combines a funky bass line with Latin and African rhythmic influences. It uses thumb position at the second octave, and chords and double stops. Think of it as a polyphonic piece, played by a band which includes bass, electric guitar, piano, drums, and Latin percussion. Staccato dots in this etude indicate a true staccato.

(See p.7, l.2, m.1, and similar passages that follow): The eighth-notes should be sustained and articulated.

(See p.7, l.5, m.1; l.6, m.2; l.7, m.3; l.8, m.4): For the passages which lead to rests, lift the bow off the string but keep the left hand on, to allow the notes to ring.

No. 4. This is exactly what it is called—a "laid-back" etude. Despite the technical demands (chords, double stops, difficult arpeggios, and thumb position in the lower part of the string), it must sound relaxed and effortless. In order to achieve the desired sound for the beginning, place the bow on the string with its natural weight, parallel to the bridge. Pull the bow just enough to produce a clear, free, ringing tone. Note that although the only dynamic marking is **mf**, there should be beautiful phrasing.

No. 5. Folk-oriented, and floating from key to key, this etude emphasizes the sixth. Good spiccato bowing is like wind through the sails.

No. 6. It helps to have a large hand to play this—a barnyard stomp with a touch of elegance. Here chords are interspersed with melody. The rhythms are based on country music and are reflected in the bowings.

No. 7. An American's impressions of various regions in France emerge here as a study in the whole-tone scale, a favorite device of French impressionist composers. For the bow there are snappy rhythms and tremolo.

No. 8. This started out as a rock song. It includes wide-range arpeggios and its virtuosity is intended to give the cellist an opportunity to "go crazy."

No. 9. Harmonic melodies and right-hand finger techniques learned by bassists and classical guitarists, help provide a primo mood. The cello rib slap is the "crack of dawn."

No. 10. The most lyrical of the set, this etude is good for practicing legato bowing and a light sustained sound.

TEN AMERICAN CELLO ETUDES

1. The Train Whistle

Aaron Minsky

Musical score for "The Train Whistle" by Aaron Minsky, featuring ten staves of cello notation. The score includes various musical instructions and dynamics:

- Tempo: $\text{♩} = 160$
- Staff 1: *f*, *off the string*, *always open strings*
- Staff 5: *mp*
- Staff 6: *f*, *1st positio..*
- Staff 8: *somewhat sustained*
- Staff 9: *1st position*, *dim.*, *mf*

The score is written in bass clef, 4/4 time, and includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

This page of musical notation consists of ten staves of music, likely for a string quartet. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several annotations throughout the score:

- At the top of the first staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes.
- At the top of the second staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes.
- At the top of the third staff, there is a '3' marking above a triplet of notes.
- At the top of the fourth staff, there is a '3' marking above a triplet of notes.
- At the top of the fifth staff, there is a '3' marking above a triplet of notes.
- At the top of the sixth staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes, followed by a 'V' marking above a note.
- At the top of the seventh staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes.
- At the top of the eighth staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes.
- At the top of the ninth staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes.
- At the top of the tenth staff, there are two 'V' markings above the notes.

Dynamic and performance markings include:

- cresc.* (crescendo) in the sixth staff.
- f* (forte) in the sixth staff.
- off the string* in the sixth staff.
- rit.* (ritardando) in the tenth staff.
- a tempo* in the tenth staff.

2. Truckin' Through the South

♩ = 120-126

f Close to string

mf

mp

full sound

dim.

p

f sustained

The score consists of ten staves of music in a bass clef, 12/8 time signature, and B-flat major key. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 120-126. The music features a variety of articulations, including accents (V), slurs, and dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, *mp*, *dim.*, *p*, and *f* sustained. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-4. The piece concludes with a final chord marked *f* sustained.

dim. *p* at the frog

cresc. *f* flowing *mf* subito

f *mp* *mf*

p *pp* off the string cresc.

f *mf*

mp

cresc. *f*

3. Broadway

♩ = 116-120

The musical score is written for piano and violin in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 116-120. The piano part is primarily in the bass clef, while the violin part is in the treble clef. The score consists of eight staves. The piano part features a variety of dynamics including *mf*, *fp*, *mp*, and *f*, along with articulation marks such as accents and slurs. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated in the first staff. The violin part is marked *f* and includes many slurs and accents. The final staff of the piano part includes a crescendo hairpin and the marking *cresc.*

let ring

f

fp

f

fp

f

mp

pp

p

mp

remain in position - - - -

mp

IV1

mf

f

ff

* From above the string strike the string with the bow near the frog, forcing the string to hit the fingerboard. This should produce a sharp percussive sound. (Be careful!)

4. Laid-back Devil

$\text{♩} = 92 - 96$

The musical score is written for bass clef in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps) and 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 92-96 and a dynamic of *mf*. The notation consists of ten staves. The first staff includes a fingering box with numbers 1, 2, and 1. The score features various musical notations including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets, often grouped with slurs and accents. Fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) are placed above notes throughout. The piece concludes with a final measure on the tenth staff.

This page of musical notation is for a bass instrument, likely a double bass, in the key of G major (one sharp). It consists of ten staves of music. The first four staves feature a complex, flowing melodic line with many slurs and dynamic markings such as *φ* and *V*. The fifth and sixth staves show a more rhythmic, chordal accompaniment with frequent slurs and dynamic markings. The seventh and eighth staves continue this rhythmic pattern. The ninth and tenth staves conclude the piece with a final melodic flourish and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking.

5. Sailing Down the River

♩ = 168 - 184

mf always light

2 1

2 1

f

The musical score is written for a single bass clef instrument in 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking of ♩ = 168 - 184. The first staff includes a dynamic marking of *mf* and the instruction "always light". The score consists of ten staves of music. The first seven staves feature a steady eighth-note accompaniment with various chordal textures and articulation marks (accents and slurs). The eighth and ninth staves show a change in texture with more complex chordal patterns and some slurs. The final staff concludes with a dynamic marking of *f* and features a melodic line with slurs and a final cadence.

This page of musical notation is for a bass instrument, likely a double bass, and consists of ten staves of music. The notation includes various dynamics, articulations, and fingerings. The first staff begins with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking and a *mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamic. The second staff features a *p* (piano) dynamic. The third staff includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking and a *f* (forte) dynamic. The fourth staff starts with a *p* dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking. The fifth staff begins with a *p* dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking and a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking. The sixth staff starts with a *p* dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking. The seventh staff begins with a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking. The eighth staff starts with a *mf* dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking. The ninth staff begins with a *f* (forte) dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking. The tenth staff starts with a *f* dynamic and includes a *cresc.* marking. The notation also includes various articulations such as slurs, accents, and breath marks, as well as fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4) and specific techniques like *4o* (fourth octave) and *V* (vibrato).

6. The Flag Waver

♩ = 126 - 138

mf Play the melody on the A string.

Musical staff 1: Bass clef, eighth-note triplet pattern.

Musical staff 2: Bass clef, chords with fingering (1, 1, 2, 4, 2, 1, 2) and dynamics (*f*, *mf*).

Musical staff 3: Bass clef, chords with dynamics (*p*, *cresc.*).

Musical staff 4: Bass clef, eighth-note triplet pattern with dynamics (*f*).

Musical staff 5: Bass clef, eighth-note triplet pattern with dynamics (*f*).

Musical staff 6: Bass clef, chords with dynamics (*dim.*, *p*, *cresc.*).

Musical staff 7: Bass clef, chords with dynamics (*ff*, *f*).

Musical staff 8: Bass clef, eighth-note triplet pattern with dynamics (*f*).

Musical staff 9: Bass clef, eighth-note triplet pattern with dynamics (*f*).

7. An American in France

$\text{♩} = 112-116$ Marchlike but free

mf

$\text{♩} = 116$ floating

rit. *p tremolo*

rit. *mf, floating*

mp

cresc. *rit.*

$\text{♩} = 116$

f *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

mf *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

$\text{♩} = 56$

rit.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score is written for a bass clef instrument, likely a double bass or electric bass. It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second and third staves continue this melodic line, with the third staff including a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a ritardando (*rit.*) marking. The fourth staff marks the beginning of a new section with a tempo of 116 beats per minute (♩ = 116) and a 4/4 time signature. This section is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, with dynamics ranging from forte (*f*) to piano (*p*). The fifth and sixth staves continue this rhythmic pattern, with dynamic markings of *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, and *f*. The seventh and eighth staves further develop the rhythmic texture, with dynamic markings of *mf*, *p*, *f*, *p*, and *f*. The ninth staff introduces a change in tempo to 56 beats per minute (♩ = 56) and a 3/2 time signature, featuring a melodic line with slurs and accents. The final staff concludes the piece with a ritardando (*rit.*) marking and a final melodic flourish.

8. Like Crazy

$\text{♩} = 120 - 132$ ($\text{♩} = 60 - 66$)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of eight staves. The first seven staves are in bass clef, and the eighth staff is split between bass and treble clefs. The piece begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns, such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. Chordal textures are indicated by vertical lines and stems. Fingerings are clearly marked with numbers 1-4. Slurs and ties are used to connect notes across measures. The score includes several measures with complex rhythmic figures, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. A large bracket on the eighth staff groups a section of the music, with a handwritten circled '4' above it and a circled '1' below it. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Musical staff 1: Treble and bass clefs. Notes with slurs and fingering: III, 1, 10, 1.

Musical staff 2: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: III, 1, 10, 1. Includes handwritten annotations: V, 4.

Musical staff 3: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: V. Includes handwritten annotations: V, 4.

Musical staff 4: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: 1, 7, 4, 1. Includes handwritten annotations: fp, pont.

Musical staff 5: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: 2. Includes handwritten annotations: V, 4.

Musical staff 6: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: 3. Includes handwritten annotations: cresc., on, V.

Musical staff 7: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: V. Includes handwritten annotations: pont.

Musical staff 8: Bass clef. Notes with slurs and fingering: V. Includes handwritten annotations: full, rit.

9. The Crack of Dawn

$\text{♩} = 96-100$

pp

cresc. accel. poco a poco

$\text{♩} = 138$

f

decresc.

rit.

$\text{♩} = 132$

pizz.

p

simile

pizz. using four fingers of the right hand, don't arpeggiate

strum

*** arco*

$\text{♩} = 96-100$

mf

sf

ff

* Numbers in () indicate fingerings for Right Hand pizzicato.
 ** Slap upper left cello rib with hand.

10. October Waltz

mp $\text{♩} = 84-88$

mf sustained

dim. *rit.* *mp* a tempo

$\text{♩} = 96$ *accel.*

$\text{♩} = 100$ *mf* *rit.* $\text{♩} = 96$

a tempo *rit.*

cresc. $\text{♩} = 100$ *a tempo* *f*

rit. stay in position $\text{♩} = 84-88$ *p*

mp *rit.*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a waltz in bass clef, 3/4 time. The piece is titled "10. October Waltz" and is on page 19. The score is written in a single system with ten staves. It begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 84-88$ and a dynamic of *mp*. The first staff contains several measures with various fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and accents. The second staff has a dynamic of *mf* sustained. The third staff includes markings for *dim.*, *rit.*, and *mp* a tempo. The fourth staff starts with a tempo change to $\text{♩} = 96$ and an *accel.* marking. The fifth staff has a tempo of $\text{♩} = 100$ and a dynamic of *mf*, followed by a *rit.* marking and a tempo change back to $\text{♩} = 96$. The sixth staff is marked *a tempo* and *rit.*. The seventh staff features a *cresc.* marking and a tempo of $\text{♩} = 100$, with a dynamic of *f*. The eighth staff has a tempo of $\text{♩} = 84-88$ and a dynamic of *p*. The final staff concludes with a dynamic of *mp* and a *rit.* marking.