Steffen Schleiermacher’s Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano: A Performance and Teaching Perspective

Daryl Francisco Rojas Rojas

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STEFFEN SCHLEIERMACHER’S TWELVE SOUNDSCAPES INSIDE THE PIANO: A PERFORMANCE AND TEACHING PERSPECTIVE

by

Daryl F. Rojas

A Dissertation
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Requirements for the Degree of
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Also, I would like to thank my friends and family; you know who you are. I have learned from each of you; you have been patient, understanding and supportive throughout my musical journey. My colleagues around the world, who have been there for me in spite of being in distant countries; we reach out and keep up with each other somehow.

I have no words to express my gratitude towards distinguished composer and pianist Steffen Schleiermacher, who has been kind enough to answer my questions about his compositions. Thank you for meeting with me in Leipzig and for showing me every corner of the city. I hope this dissertation will serve as a tribute to your work.

Finally, I extend thanks to Gintaras Januševičius for his kindness, for believing in me and for his endless mentorship and support.
This document presents the living German composer and pianist Steffen Schleiermacher’s *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano* as a tool for intermediate level pianists who would like to incorporate unconventional piano techniques in their repertoire. It also provides a technical and pedagogical analysis for pianists and teachers who would like to learn more about a composer who is relatively unknown in the US.

This document includes a brief biography and artistic background of the composer, including information from a face-to-face interview that will be addressed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides an outline of the concept, brief history, a glossary and use of what are known as extended piano techniques. Furthermore, Chapters 4 through 10 will focus on the analysis of the chosen seven piano pieces from the whole set. It is hoped that this document will provide more knowledge to all pianists and teachers who have been curious about exploring non-traditional techniques but have not yet found short piano pieces to learn about them. This is a way for both teacher and student not to feel overwhelmed but to feel confident enough to teach works of a new composer to their students, expanding their technical and musical abilities through new piano repertoire.
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The goal of this dissertation is to contribute to the understanding of the piano execution of extended techniques and their pedagogical benefits for intermediate pianists from the set of *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*, written by the living German composer, Steffen Schleiermacher, who is relatively unknown in the US. Other composers such as John Cage, Henry Cowell, and George Crumb have been important pioneers and references for the non-traditional piano techniques for many piano students and professionals in the US and worldwide. Schleiermacher explores these kinds of techniques that were developed during the first half of the twentieth century; then, as a strong and highly trained pianist and composer, he takes the twentieth century use of these techniques and develops his own language in his compositions from the latter part of the last century into the twenty-first century.

While learning how to play the piano, one of the most common approaches, at least in North America, is to build repertoire with traditional piano literature. The tendency of many piano teachers and performers is to exclude the piano repertoire of the second half of the twentieth century or of living composers. This trend is even more pronounced when the literature involves the physical manipulation of the strings and other non-traditional techniques.

University of Oklahoma emeritus professor and well-known author, clinician and piano pedagogue, Dr. Jane Magrath, in her book *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance*, includes only a few compositions from the twentieth century that involve non-traditional techniques. However, while reviewing her book, she includes composers such as Samuel Adler (1928- ); and some of his pieces from his *Gradus, Book III (1981)*, are suggested. Although written for prepared piano, Richard Bunger (1942- ) and his *Three Bolts Out of the*
Blues (1979) is catalogued later on. Composers like Henry Cowell (1897-1965) are represented by a few titles: The Tides of Manaunaun (1912), The Banshee (1925), Aeolian Harp (1923); while George Crumb (1929-2022) is not cited at all in this resource.¹

This music requires the intermediate student to have a high level of reading skills, an understanding of the possibilities of the instrument and its usage, and a commitment to learn new notations and symbols to reproduce complex textures from the score. Therefore, some teachers might find it either tedious or outside their preferred teaching repertoire. The author suggests that a set of pieces from volumes II, III and IV of Bartók’s Mikrokosmos would be a suitable transition from early twentieth century literature to the modern sonorities of the current period. Schleiermacher’s piano pieces are a good example of piano literature for any pianist at the intermediate level and above who would like to learn progressively about extended techniques and contemporary musical language through short programmatic pieces. By learning extended techniques as a natural part of recognizing the possibilities of the instrument, students, performers, and audiences alike will develop a better understanding of the capabilities of the piano and of the sonorities the instrument’s mechanics can produce. Furthermore, this repertoire enhances the musician’s abilities to listen in depth for new timbres, since the possibilities of potential new sounds are expanded far beyond the standard limits of piano playing. This plays out particularly in the concert hall, because of the acoustic range that a large space provides.

It is advisable for pianists, teachers and students who do not have a functional sostenuto pedal in their homes or studios to use any heavy object such as a thick book about the size of a hymnal, or a brick that is wrapped in cloth. This book or brick can be placed on the lowest octave

of the piano, and it will silently depress those keys, opening the vibration of the lower strings. This will replicate the function of the sostenuto pedal. Although this is not a performance suggestion, it is a temporary and practical way to attune one’s ear to sympathetic vibrations. The practice and performance of this set of pieces would only work on a grand piano and any electronic keyboards should be avoided. If a grand piano is available which has a sostenuto pedal, it is suggested that it be checked or repaired by a piano technician prior to learning any of the pieces from this set.

This dissertation is not intended to trace the historical origins or to be a manual on how to develop expertise when using the so-called extended piano techniques. A technical analysis of each of the seven pieces that incorporate extended techniques will be provided, devoting a chapter to each piece. This will include voicing, rhythmic aspects, melodic lines, structure of phrasing, texture, and the technical challenges for learning the *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*. These non-traditional techniques are considered a part of the content and context of seven of this set of twelve intermediate piano pieces (as five of the pieces do not include extended techniques, as mentioned above).

Steffen Schleiermacher’s *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano* were commissioned in 2000 by the Deutschlandfunk Köln and published in 2001 by Breitkopf and Härtel in Wiesbaden, Germany.
CHAPTER 2

Biography

Steffen Schleiermacher was born on May 3, 1960, in Halle, Lower Saxony, in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). From 1980 until 1985 he studied and graduated from the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theater in Leipzig and studied composition under Siegfried Thiele and Friedrich Schenker, conducting under Günter Blumhagen and piano with Gerhard Erber. Soon after, he decided to move to Berlin, where he enrolled at the Berlin Academy of the Arts by being selected to study composition in the studio of Friedrich Goldmann from 1986 until 1987. Then, from 1989 until 1990 he continued his piano studies at the Cologne University of Music and Dance under the guidance of Aloys Kontarsky. ²

In his prolific career as a pianist he has concertized as a soloist with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the German Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the Munich Philharmonic, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and many others under conductors Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kurt Masur, Ingo Metzmacher, Wladimir Jurowski, Fabio Luisi and Friedrich Goldmann. Over the years, Schleiermacher’s concert tours have taken him throughout Europe, South America, and the Middle and Far East.

Since 1988 he has been the artistic director of the Musica Nova series at the Gewandhaus Leipzig. In 1989 he founded and became the artistic director of the Ensemble Avantgarde, whose mission is to perform only modern compositions which have been forgotten in time rather than focusing on premiering new compositions. He led the January Festival at the Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts from 1993 until 2000 as well as the KlangRausch annual festival, from 2000 until

² Biography downloaded from his official website and Accessed on February 12th, 2024, http://www.schleiermacher-leipzig.de
2010, held at the Mitteldeutscher Rudfunk (MDR), the public Central German Broadcasting station for radio and television for the states of Thuringia, Saxony and Lower Saxony.

Schleiermacher has recorded more than eighty CDs under different labels including Hat Art, Wergo, MDG and others. His recordings include the integral piano works by Erik Satie, Philip Glass, Morton Feldman, Arnold Schönberg, Toshio Hosokawa, Slamet Abdul Sjukur, Michael Asmara, Soe Tjen Marching; as well as the first recording of the complete piano compositions by John Cage.

His numerous prizes, fellowships and awards include the first prize of the Gaudeamus Competition, the Hans Eisler Prize, the Kranichstein Music Prize and the Christoph and Stephan Kaske Foundation Prize. He has been a fellow at the Villa Massimo in Rome, the Japan Foundation, the Cité des Arts in Paris; and he has been an Artist in Residence at the Villa Concordia in Bamberg. Also, he has been a six-time winner of the Echo Klassik, Germany’s highest classical music award; the Siemens Foundation Prize and the Schneider-Schott Prize of Mainz. In 2010 he received the Order of Merit as Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres from the French Minister of Culture.

Steffen Schleiermacher currently resides in Leipzig, Germany. He is related to the nineteenth century theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher.
The Musician

Steffen Schleiermacher started playing the piano at home as a child, encouraged by his mother’s passion for playing the instrument. Both Steffen and his brother Eckard began taking piano lessons at an early age. Piano practice was not his main interest, as he lacked discipline during those years. However, he stimulated his curiosity at that young age by placing different objects inside the strings of the piano, such as books, newspapers, and other objects while “practicing” his sonatinas. After the early passing of his mother, his father reinforced the continuation of his piano lessons.

Schleiermacher describes himself as a musician. He does not believe in separating his profession into individual components, since one facet so closely affects the others. He also considers that titles should not be restricted to single labels such as composer, pianist, conductor, concert organizer, presenter, artistic director or ensemble leader. In his personal experience and in chronological order, he would say that initially he was a pianist, then a composer, next an organizer and presenter, and lastly a conductor. 3

Until this day, he questions the lofty reputation that a composer has, particularly the reactions that one gets from people everywhere, or even the reactions from those who may not know what being a musician or a composer entails. Schleiermacher sees his role as a composer as another modest, but rather old, profession that has survived for centuries.

Earlier in his career part of his routine included practicing the piano for many hours during the daylight and composing in the evening. While following this schedule, Schleiermacher realized how this affected his own writings, as the melodies and harmonies of a particular composer that were flowing during his daily practice might unconsciously influence

his writings later at night. Upon recognizing this, he changed his schedule to minimize this effect.

As a musician, Schleiermacher’s priorities throughout his day vary, depending on his timelines, schedule, and clients. Sometimes piano practice requires more hours from him than composing, particularly when there are new pieces to prepare for a concert. The preparation time varies, according to him; discovering works of other composers, learning new repertoire or organizing new thoughts for the concerts is more time-consuming than revisiting learned repertoire. In his own experience, some pieces demand more time than others during the learning process; others become more familiar after studying them, which leads to fully understanding the thoughts of the composers. For him some pieces are incomprehensible at first but become more accessible over time.

His professional tasks as a composer include accepting new commissions and maintaining good relationships with both old and new “customers,” as he refers to them, customizing their products for different occasions. When selecting titles for his new compositions, sometimes his clients impose a particular title; or when asking them about their opinions, his clients often have very specific ideas. Some are more demanding while others are more flexible; and some don’t have ideas of what they want to express when requesting a new composition. In this regard, Schleiermacher’s experiences have led him to select different titles for a variety of topics or representations that were needed for something specific or for a commission. Some examples are *Car Factory with a Horn Room* (for brass ensemble, sampler and tape), *Eight!* (for four French horns and four percussionists), *Compressed Air* (for five
flutes), *The Magic of Rotating Dreams* (for piano and string quartet), *Funeral Song for a Little Elephant* (for French horn), *Still in Air* (for solo voice) and many others.⁴

Having different thoughts on how to better represent a piece of music through the title is part of what he considers special, as in the long-term a composer expects that composition to stay in the memory of the listener. On different occasions certain disagreements may arise. For example, he has found unexpected suggestions for the birth of a new piece a bit distracting while in the process of serving these customers. As he explains, one commissioner cannot think clearly about what title would be better for the request, because the thoughts may be focused on what the publicity on a wall, a poster, a magazine, or a catalogue might look like; how this title would be perceived by the audience; or how many followers it will attract. Nowadays, the “customers demand the so called ‘original titles’ because they want to stand out from the crowd or the traditional; at times they demand titles that are not about the piece, rather the title is supposed to arouse curiosity.”⁵

While composing, Schleiermacher tries to limit his piano playing. When not engaged in those two activities, he spends a lot of time and energy dealing with the bureaucracy to organize and schedule concerts in different concert halls, cities, crafting programs, rehearsals and reaching out to his colleagues. As an organizer of different venues with many years of experience, Schleiermacher believes that in today’s world, a musician should be able to do more than play an instrument. He encourages every musician to become familiar with both artistic and

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⁴ Composition’s names are in his official website and Accessed on February 12th, 2024, http://www.schleiermacher-leipzig.de

administrative endeavors, as he believes that musicians should be involved in organizing and programming concerts under different circumstances and at different times in their lives.

During his own academic studies, he was already exploring and working from this perspective. According to Schleiermacher, getting to know that other side of performances means to value and to grow as a musician and as a person and builds up meaningful relations with colleagues. He also states that at times “it helps some people to get rid of the quite widespread artist’s sense of entitlement.”

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Figure 2.7. Piano lesson with Aloys Kontarsky, Darmstadt, 1986.
The Interview

In the early afternoon on Tuesday, April 4th of 2023, Steffen Schleiermacher was able to meet me at the Leipzig-Mitte Train Station. This interview took place at Café Central at 6pm by the author, Daryl Rojas.

**DR:** What was the specific request from the Deutschland Radio Funk back in 2000 to compose the *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*?

**SS:** If I remember correctly, the commissioned was for another different type of project. Then, they changed their mind and asked me if I was interested in doing something fun for children. I started to work on four pieces without the official commission and showed them to my girlfriend, who is a piano teacher. Then the budget was released, and I had to write more, and I thought about the cycle.

**DR:** Have you played this set on a concert?

**SS:** No, I haven’t played the whole cycle in public, and it has been more than twenty years since I wrote them.

**DR:** Did you consider before composing these pieces using nontraditional techniques from a pedagogical aspect for young pianists?

**SS:** Well, the basic idea was to compose something like *Mikrokosmos* by Bartók but with some extensions inside the piano because nobody has the experience at that age, and nobody
wants to teach them. If you play these pieces, then later you get a score from George Crumb or someone else, it will prepare you to correctly use the middle pedal, silent pressing of the keys, resonance of notes. Of course not everything in one piece but more or less with a simple structure, like piano etudes.

**DR:** Why the programmatic title of the pieces?

**SS:** Ohh no, the titles are stupid [laughs]. I don’t like them now. In German there is this word that is like you speak like you sing and children speak very differently. The kids that should play these pieces are around fifteen or sixteen years old, not younger. The stupid titles are for these kids.

**DR:** You have recorded integral piano literature from different American composers. Is there any particular reason you feel drawn to it?

**SS:** Generally, I play music that I like and that I want to play. I don’t ask where it is coming from. I don’t have any favorite list of composers or a list of those that I dislike. Well, maybe Varèse has like only ten pieces that are worth something. Other compositions are s**t [laughs]. During different periods of my life I have been interested in playing certain composers, like Russian avant-garde. Other years I have only played Feldman and Cage; some other years only Stockhausen or different expressionist German composers, or later Satie. Ten years later I felt like I don’t want to play them anymore. Some others still remain in my repertoire even after thirty years, and I feel like I want to visit them again. Morton Feldman, whom I love very much, for example, and nobody plays; is very famous and popular in the Netherlands. I even met him a couple of times, not in the US but in Germany!
DR: How would you say or describe your compositional style?

SS: I don’t have a style. I tried to not have a style. I think it is very dangerous; you are under a trap and then you compose every time the same pieces. Like German composers Jörg Widmann and Wolfgang Rihm, every time is the same. I tried to avoid it. Maybe if someone looks from the outside, the person might find certain elements that come again, some structures, or some ideas; but it is not something that I think about while I’m composing.

DR: Have you written a piano concerto?

SS: Nope.

DR: Are you planning on writing one?

SS: No, no. Because the problem is, if I write one, I have to play it myself and I don’t have interest in premiering my own pieces. I composed a concerto for organ and orchestra, for saxophone and orchestra. Not for piano, no violin, cello, actually viola and a small ensemble was one of my early compositions.

DR: Going back into one of the questions from before. Do you see yourself changing your style this year, next or in ten years from now?

SS: Nope. I am an old school composer. I compose with notes, with rhythms, harmonies, I compose with form. I like to have a piece with an audible form, and not these soundscapes that never start and never end that is so irrational that you don’t hear what it is. I have never composed using electronics, never compose with or for video for performance or whatever. Young composers here in Leipzig they don’t understand what I’m doing, and I don’t understand what they are doing and that’s fine.
DR: Do you have current projects, commissions to finish?

SS: I do. I have some projects I’m working on. I have project and I find no end. I composed around seventy songs for Joseph von Eichendorff, the romantic poet. I started about two or three years ago more or less for fun. I tried to stop it. I find a new poem every time and continue. I’m not a good friend of Netflix [laughs].

DR: You compose mainly here in Leipzig?

SS: Yes. I compose at my home; I have a working space and I composed directly in my computer with Finale. These ideas develop while I’m composing, there is no plan before and then I figure it out and follow my entrances. If I hesitate, it won’t take me more than two minutes to continue. I like to write one piece/song a day, not one per week. If the basic idea is good, you can do it in two or three hours; if not, you will need ten days for a longer idea to develop or just to put it away. Schumann’s *Liederkreis* was composed in ten days! I don’t like spending two years on something, the idea already will be gone! Orchestral pieces I work a maximum of forty days.

DR: You are an accomplished pianist; do you consider yourself more inclined towards the piano?

SS: I am a musician.

DR: Do you get upset when you hear a bad reproduction of your compositions in different recordings out there?
SS: Nope. Sometimes it is not so important if the notes are right or wrong. Is more important that the musical idea is there, that they understand the music. Listen to the old recordings of Alfred Cortot playing Chopin, there is not a single right note in some of his recordings, full of wrong notes. But the music is there. Listening to different people playing all over the world, you hear good playing: everything is right and at the same time all is wrong! The best will be a mixture of both, who plays almost all the notes and understands the music. There are people out there who do it. I remember attending a small town orchestra here in Germany, a terrible orchestra! They were playing Bartók’s piano concertos, the three with the crazy genius of Zoltán Kocsis as a soloist. It was absolutely clear, that the orchestra was not capable of playing this music at all, but the energy and the musicality of every musician in that orchestra was fantastic. I will never forget. I played for Kocsis one time in Hungary, unforgettable.

DR: Before we leave, any current living composers that you like?

SS: I like many of my colleagues. But not their music [laughs]. Ideal situation will be, liking both. Terrible it will be if I didn’t like both. But sometimes it happens that out of a hundred, there is one that is a really good piece, and then again, the cycle continues.
Figure 2.8. Daryl Rojas and Steffen Schleiermacher, Leipzig, 2023.
CHAPTER 3

Non–traditional piano techniques

The extended or non-traditional piano techniques were developed among composers in the early twentieth century, between World War I and World War II, thus laying the groundwork for prolific experimentation post-World War II. This dark period of history had an effect on the writers, artists, musicians and particularly an emerging wave of composers, not only in Europe but also in the US. The political and psychological traumas caused by World War I influenced composers such as Schönberg, Berg, Webern, Ives, Cowell, Cage and others to search for new convictions, new sounds and for new sources of inspiration amidst the fervor of nationalistic movements within their own countries as tools for new means of artistic expression.\(^7\)

In the US, one of the most prolific American composers who pioneered the non-traditional techniques for the piano in the first half of the twentieth century was Henry Cowell (1897-1965). As a pianist, he toured not only in the United States but also in Europe and the former Soviet Union. Cowell programmed his own compositions most of the time and often provoked audiences with his innovative approaches in utilizing new resources to produce different timbres from the piano. As a teenager, he was already experimenting and writing a vast number of short piano pieces in different styles utilizing different mixtures of rhythms.\(^8\) Around this period of time Cowell wrote the first piece to have a tonecluster: *The Tides of Manaunaun* (1912), in which the cluster range gradually grows from one octave to two or more, transitioning from the left palm of the hand to using the forearm by gradually increasing the dynamics. In 1923, in *The Aeolian Harp*, another technique was explored by playing directly on the strings


\(^8\) Ibid., 123-124.
inside of the piano. In this one-page piece, Cowell provides explicit written instructions to the performer. Three elements from this piece remain memorable, since all the chords written have to be silently depressed while the right hand strums up and down the middle range of the open strings inside of the piano. He also adds *pizzicatos* where the performer plucks the strings with the flesh of the finger in two different locations, near the pins and near the center of the strings. Another important instruction in this piece occurs in the recapitulation, where Cowell indicates that the strum of the strings must be played with the back of the thumb nail in order to produce a louder dynamic range. Therefore, the novelty of performing *Aeolian Harp* was a new approach for the pianist to produce sounds in a physical way inside the piano. A couple of years later, Cowell wrote *The Banshee* (1925) and presented detailed instructions throughout the score for the pianist on how to execute the different effects that the hands need to produce in the harp of the piano, this time adding the use of the damper pedal, which has to be held all the way through the entire piece.\(^9\) Since the performer has to be standing at the crook of the piano, Cowell suggests having a second person assisting at the keyboard without playing, only depressing the damper pedal.

Henry Cowell’s contributions to the piano literature certainly have prevailed among different generations of avant-garde pianists and composers and many musicians are endeared to his historical contributions to music. To briefly understand his influences, one has to consider that extended piano techniques do not modify or affect the natural timbre of the piano. This is the opposite to how John Cage (1912-1992) experimented and contributed in his compositions by radically altering the sounds of the piano by placing different objects inside the instrument,

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known as prepared piano, as found in one of his most famous works, Bacchanale (1938).\textsuperscript{10} Even though Cage learned from Cowell, each had different visions of experimenting with the piano. Cowell’s contributions can be classified into four different categories that will serve as a way to better understand Steffen Schleiermacher’s set of Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano.

The first of Cowell’s contributions is the tone cluster, which is a series of a minimum of three stacked pitches. Used for its sound qualities, clusters can be played on the white keys or the black keys with the fingers, hands or forearms. Another important extended piano technique is that of sympathetic vibrations, activated by silently depressing any key or group of keys, holding them with either the hand or with the sostenuto pedal. After lifting the hand from the groups of keys selected, the dampers will be released and the open strings will vibrate when other pitches are activated. As an aside, during the nineteenth century the German composer, Robert Schumann (1810-1856) introduces two chords that have to be silently depressed at the end of Paganini, one of the movements from Carnaval, Op.9. The next group is one of Henry Cowell’s favorites, the string piano techniques, in which fingernails, fingertips, hands, or nails will pluck or strum the strings inside of the piano (pizzicato and glissando). Within this category is the flageolet, where a fingertip slightly touches the string to find the correct harmonic on different parts of the string inside the piano. The last one is the combined techniques, as found in the last piano work of George Crumb (1929-2022), Metamorphoses II (2020). In the combined techniques the pianist may whisper, whistle, sing or speak in combination with the use of the palm of the hands, the fist, a mallet or other objects and by knocking on different parts of the piano, either inside or outside of the instrument.\textsuperscript{11} Another example from the piano literature

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where the pianist uses a mallet to strike individual strings inside the piano can be found in Sofia Gubaidulina’s (1931- ) monumental *Piano Sonata* (1965).

After some years of exploring these new approaches, composers began to be more specific with the musical notation for a standardized way to instruct the performer on how to interpret these extended piano techniques.
### GLOSSARY

Notation and Symbols used in the *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="" /></td>
<td>Depress damper pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="" /></td>
<td>Release pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="" /></td>
<td>Depress sostenuto pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="" /></td>
<td>Dampe / Mute the string(s) \nSquare notehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="" /></td>
<td>Silently depress white-key cluster within the notated \nrange with the forearm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6" alt="" /></td>
<td>Silently depress black-key cluster within the notated \nrange with the forearm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="" /></td>
<td>Play cluster with the starting note on the black keys with \nthe palm of the hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image8" alt="" /></td>
<td>Play cluster with the starting note on the white keys with \nthe palm of the hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image9" alt="" /></td>
<td>Flageolet / Slightly touch the string with the right hand \nto \nfind the correct harmonic on different parts of the string \n2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th partial. \nDiamond shaped notehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pizz. v.</td>
<td>Pizzicato / Pluck the string with the fingertip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pizz. v.N.</td>
<td>Pizzicato / Pluck the string with the fingernail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pizz. M.</td>
<td>Pizzicato / Pluck near the middle of the string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image10" alt="" /></td>
<td>Stumm / Depress silently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image11" alt="" /></td>
<td>Glissando / Strum strings with the fingertips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image12" alt="" /></td>
<td>Gleiten / Scrape string lengthwise with the fingernail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1. Notation used in Schleiermacher’s *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metallisch Geräusch / Metallic Sound</td>
<td>hit the strut of the piano frame with a metallic bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verstrebung / Knock the indicated rhythm</td>
<td>on one of the struts of the piano’s frame with a flat hand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Pedals of the piano.
Parts inside the piano used in the Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano

Figure 3.2. Parts inside the piano used in the *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*. 

- **Strut bars, frame**
- **Middle range of the strings**
- **Dampers**
- **Softer sounds produced in this area**
- **Brighter sounds produced in this area**
Available Resources

Unusual in its internal design, the German piano manufacturer Sauter, offers the model Omega 220, 7.2 feet in length, to facilitate the pianist’s movement between the keys and across the strings, and the dampers. In this model the dampers are labeled with their respective key colors (black and white). The soundboard provides three colored lines, dividing the strings into three parts, making it easier for the pianist to locate the partials.

Figure 3.3. Parts inside of the Sauter Omega 220 piano model.
CHAPTER 4

Am Bergsee / At the Mountain Lake

This piece is notated with four staves and has a tempo marking indicating that it is slow. The dynamic suggestion is piano with another instruction of espressivo, molto legato. A four-bar melodic phrase opens the piece with double thirds in each hand that continues in a similar manner throughout the whole piece. In the top and bottom staves, there are black-key chords that juxtapose the inner staves.

The inner two layers move in strict contrary motion, offering a modal melody and accompaniment as seen here:


The right-hand melodic line uses the F Lydian scale while the left hand plays the C Mixolydian scale. This polymodal sonority creates a very peaceful opening phrase. As a response, some “ridges and edges”\(^\text{12}\) enter by surprise, creating another gesture in the extremities of the higher and lower pitches of the piano. These chords must be played on the black keys using a pentatonic scale. Additionally, a sound effect is introduced by pressing the sostenuto

pedal (bar 5), sustaining a major third in one hand and a minor third in the other hand through the whole measure. While the accented chords are being played without the damper pedal, at the end of the first line, as seen in Example 4.1, the sound of the thirds can still be heard.

The second line of the piece begins replying by an interval of a fourth above the introductory motif; ascending in the right hand and descending in the left hand. This time, the chords interrupt the melodic modal phrase, almost giving the feeling that a second piano is participating in the piece. The reaction time for the performer must be very efficient, as jumping to the extremities of the keyboard might represent a challenge. As expected, the use of the sostenuto pedal must sustain the inner notes (chords) as shown here:

Example 4.2. Schleiermacher, *At the Mountain Lake*, mm. 6-11.

Schleiermacher’s musical ideas for each piece are written in the publication of this set, which helps the performer and teacher to hear the voice of the composer. Like a type of imaginative instruction before learning each piece, the composer enhances his vision and stimulates the musical image by providing his thoughts. Pianistically, his suggestions are of extreme value, as he knows exactly how his pieces should be studied and performed.

Schleiermacher’s thoughts and advice on how to practice *At the Mountain Lake* are:
“Each hand is a mirror image of the other, like a reflection of the hills and ridges in the Lake. The two middle staves form the principal melodic part. They should be practiced first, albeit with the use of the sostenuto pedal wherever indicated (e.g. by removing the hands, as is required later, when playing the piece as a whole). Once the melodic phrases are clearly articulated, the “ridges and edges” of the outer staves can be added. Always pay attention not to let this interrupt the melodic flow of the middle parts.”

It is quite clear that the picturesque element of the piece is intrinsic in the texture, as the four staves were not randomly planned, but rather meticulously developed. The texture in the outer staves at the end of the first page changes. Now, Schleiermacher introduces melodic ridges, which are written in contrary motion, adding an impression of splashes of water.


From a pedagogical perspective, there are many elements not only to teach but also to learn. Although not related to non-traditional techniques, this piece provides an opportunity for the student to become familiar with modes. The teacher may gradually introduce what a modal scale is, its origins, and how a composer may utilize these scales in different compositions. Schleiermacher introduces two of these at the beginning of this piece and teaches the student to compare these with the harmonic scales.

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After recognizing the scales for both the right and left hands, the next step should be to practice the double thirds (bars 1-4). The first phrase (bars 1-5) must be played *molto legato*. Practicing double thirds enhances the pianist’s handshape by reinforcing staying in close contact with the surface of the keys. When practicing double thirds, one must realize that there will be moments when not all the notes will be connected. Therefore, it is the pianist’s task to examine which voice of the third will be able to finger-connect from the preceding one to the following third. This will be a tool to develop control, legato, weight distribution and correct hand position on the keyboard.

Schleiermacher suggests practicing only the inner lines at first. This is an efficient idea, because the pianist will have the focus of playing the piece without the outer staves. Adding the sostenuto pedal towards the end of this phrase should be the next step in practice. Incorporating the “ridges and edges” will be the last step. The outer staves present an opportunity to learn about three aspects of the articulation presented in this piece: accents, *staccato* and *legato*. 
Example 4.4. Schleiermacher, *At the Mountain Lake*, mm. 10-11.


While learning this piece, working on the desired type of sound should be part of the learning process. Considering how much weight to use from the arm and how to attack the keys properly to create the correct sound quality are other goals. See Example 4.4.

In Example 4.5, the arrows going down represent the drop of the arm and hand. Some possible challenges in this passage of playing the contrary motion scales could be not releasing the last notes of the slurs properly. The first group (bar 13) allows one to release the slur and keep playing the last three short notes with the thumb of each hand.
The following group (bar 15) should be approached with a small rotation of each hand, and this should be discussed during the daily practice and teaching of this passage. First, one must become accustomed to finishing each group of notes as notated by the slurs, and then adding one group at a time. At the end, the idea is to feel the passage as one single gesture rather than as divided groups. This will apply as both a physical and melodic sense.

If resolved correctly, as indicated in Example 4.5, the last and longest “ridge” of *At the Mountain Lake* will successfully be performed without any hesitation. It is also the first and only gesture after a “ridge” that lands in the same initial chord of the first bar of the piece, creating a concluding statement.

Example 4.6. Schleiermacher, *At the Mountain Lake*, mm. 27-29.
CHAPTER 5

Im Schiefergebirge / In the Slate Mountains

This piece offers novel effects from the very beginning when the performer manipulates the inside of the grand piano with the right hand, forming lower sounds that are the bedrock of the piece. In the first bar, the composer introduces six bass notes for the left hand in the lowest register of the piano, while the right hand mutes the A and G strings inside the piano. The composer indicates *dämpfen* which means to mute or to dampen the strings of the piano. The technique of muting strings is notated as square noteheads, see Example 5.1. In practice, the performer should place the fingertips very close to the pins of the strings because in this way the pianist will isolate the intended strings more effectively, thus preventing the vibrations of the neighboring strings. When the left hand plays the written notes with the damper pedal, allowing the overtones to resonate throughout the full system, creating a dark sound effect as if it is coming from the deepest levels of the ground or a type of roar. In response, both hands move to the upper register, ready to play a four-bar phrase while still holding the damper pedal, playing a distinctive motif in unison that begins with “short, long, long, short, short, long” rhythmic values contrasting the lower and upper registers, as can be seen here:

![Example 5.1](image)

The rests play a fundamental role here, since they not only give time to the performer to move physically up and down and across the keyboard but also allow for the sounds to be carried into the performance space, permitting the phrases to breathe. It is not until the third line that both hands, while playing in the upper register, start to move away from the octave unison. Both hands now play at the interval of an eleventh, keeping the same rhythmical pattern, as illustrated here:

Example 5.2. Schleiermacher, *In the Slate Mountains*, mm. 13-14.

Then, the right hand moves up again to the double octave; and while keeping the same phrasing structure, the piece ends in the same octave as in the beginning. Schleiermacher’s musical ideas written for *In the Slate Mountains* are:

“Just as with the layers that form slate mountains, the two parts are layered one above the other, whereby the right hand conveys the overtone spectrum of the left hand (the octave first, then the eleventh, the double octave, and the double octave + a major third).”

From a pedagogical perspective, this piece provides a useful vehicle for an intermediate student to explore and incorporate the technique of dampening strings with one hand in a small and friendly way. The pianist will learn in only thirteen bars how to mute the strings of the piano. Throughout the entire piece Schleiermacher writes small passages alternating between the lowest pitches of the piano with legato melodic passages in the higher register.

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The ending of the piece has the longest continuous phrase, giving the sensation of an “avalanche” that reaches its destination (bars 37-44). In bar thirty-eight, the melody spans to the eleventh plus a major third. It is during the end of this phrase that there is a short chromatic shift occurs for the first time. In the last four measures of the piece, the composer adds the third pitch to be muted for the first time, the F1. This is also the only bar of the piece that has chords, adding new sounds and giving the feeling of arriving to a conclusion before the last four notes of the piece. See Example 5.3.

Because students are accustomed to clearing the pedal between harmonic shifts, the use of the damper pedal over conflicting harmonies may give the student a feeling of discomfort. However, this technique of depressing the damper pedal for extended periods of time activates more overtones, since more sounds are blended together over many measures throughout all the
phrases of the piece. It is highly suggested that one practices with the damper pedal only the muted pitches inside the piano, allowing the sounds to fade away until silence is achieved. Avoiding pedaling towards the end of any phrase will be a challenging aspect of the student’s learning journey while resting in between musical sentences.

Attentive listening and enjoyment of the blended sonorities will guide the pianist through the learning process of this piece. This will also help the student to learn how the sound should be carried in the performance space, while alternating between forte and mezzo piano dynamics.

Rhythmically, the piece is introduced in 9/8 meter and varies with 6/8 and 12/8. Slate is a mineral that is composed of different layers, so the meter changes mirror the different layers of the mountains’ topography. This is reflected in Schleiermacher’s juxtaposition of the low overtones with the right hand’s lighter melodic lines.

Example 5.4. Schleiermacher, *In the Slate Mountains*, mm. 27-30.

Counting the beats out loud while practicing the piece will encourage the student to be more accurate with the learning and performance of the piece. Since the right hand travels from the muted strings inside the piano to the higher pitches, it creates a small issue in either rushing the pick-up note in the soprano or dragging the half rest in the third beat of the first bar of the piece, repeating the possibility of this error throughout the piece if it is not resolved promptly.

Thematically, the student will be able to understand the duality of two melodic cells: bass and treble registers. The differentiation between low and high pitches in this piece should make it
easier to recognize the two different layers of sounds or characters. Unlike many other pieces of this genre, form and structure in this piece make it easier to digest what the narrative of the work is about. Analyzing phrases in a brief composition can be a good resource for a student who has challenges understanding and examining a sonata or other larger piano works.

This distinction between the upper and lower registers of the keyboard should be the departing point to teach and learn this piece. Pedagogically, this concept is one of the very first that a music student will remember from a first music lesson. However, Schleiermacher’s creativity in incorporating sound effects with an imaginative title enhances the learning process of the piece, which may eventually motivate the student to learn more complex pieces from the whole set or from other compositions.
CHAPTER 6

Auf der Insel / On the Island

The fourth piece of the set, On the Island, offers the performer and the audience a visually interesting way to start the piece by silently depressing two sets of clusters with the forearms, before playing any key of the piano.


At the beginning of the piece, both forearms should prepare the note cluster indicated by Schleiermacher. This means that the range of the square noteheads, as Example 6.1 shows, should be pressed down silently on the keys. The left forearm presses the white keys from the second lowest B to the third lowest F of the piano. The right forearm depresses the black keys from the third G to the fifth B flat of the piano. Once both forearms are on the depressed keys, the sostenuto pedal is depressed until the end of the piece; and the performer should be ready to start playing the sixteenth notes.

The sostenuto pedal plays two important roles in On the Island, since it awakens sympathetic vibrations in both the white and the black keys, but it also sustains the single flatted eighth notes written for both hands, see circled notes in Examples 6.2 and 6.3. Thanks to this, the
composer is able to highlight single notes that function as a melody in addition to the sixteenth note runs. The sixteenth note runs that are written in the white keys, ranging from G3 to B5 are activating the sympathetic vibrations of the silently depressed white-key cluster. The black keys, also because of the sostenuto pedal sustaining these depressed silent cluster notes from the beginning, allow the single flatted accented notes to resonate; becoming an ascending pentascale in the black keys at the end and meant to be heard on top of the runs that are being played in the white keys.

“The notes at the beginning (right forearm: black keys; left forearm: white keys) are to be depressed silently and then held with the middle pedal. While the white keys play an irregular wavy motion in leggiero, the black keys build a slow melody, like an island in the sea. The accents of the “black” part are chiefly to mark one’s position; in spite of the distance between them, each single tone should be considered as forming a pentatonic melody. The regular “to and fro” (always with a slight cresc. and decresc.) of the “white” wave movement should be independent of the “black” part.”

Example 6.2. Schleiermacher, On the Island.

This piece does not have any bar divisions, but the different scales played on the white keys intensify the rhythm (predominantly four against three). As seen in the circled notes in Example 6.2, the two black-key notes will sustain, as the sostenuto pedal has been held. The scales continuously create an effect similar to small waves lapping the shoreline.

This intensification builds up all the way through the end of the piece. More of the single black key melodies serve as a bridge to a small conclusion, based on a white keys scale in contrary motion. After a rest the piece ends with the highest C on the keyboard.


The student will benefit from *On the Island* by identifying two functions of the sostenuto pedal. The first one secures all the black keys from G flat 3 to B flat 4 and, as a result, are going to be held and heard. The second one secures all white keys from B2 to F3. However, since nothing is played on the keys in this range, they will sound as sympathetic resonances by playing elsewhere on the white keys.

In the bigger picture, this piece offers a wide range of different sound layers. It is the task of the performer to visualize the horizontal writing of Schleiermacher in this piece as a curve that moves up and down with different levels echoing the exchange of melodic lines. The technical challenge for the pianist lies in independently hearing the two melodic layers; leading to playing evenly on the white keys by acquiring the gestures of wave-like motions from both arms by
lightly traveling from one key to the other. The sixteenth notes have to sing lightly by creating waves of sounds through the crescendo and decrescendo. The leggiero touch can be achieved by not overpowering any notes and by considering the accented notes like bells that resonate across a concert hall.

The precision and independence of the two musical layers must sound as if two pianists are playing the two melodic ideas. Therefore, practicing only the beginning of the piece, depressing with the forearms the silent clusters with the sostenuto pedal and then playing the sixteenth note pattern all the way through the end of the piece is recommended. The last passage to practice should be the pick-up to the last line, as indicated in Example 6.3, because this is a transition point. If the pianist is not used to playing scales in contrary motion, this passage would be a great exercise to overcome any anxiety regarding that. This is the only passage in this piece where the damper pedal is indicated, while the sostenuto is being held. Lastly, the pianist should be ready to play the entire piece with no stops.
CHAPTER 7

Im Fachland / In the Lowlands

The sixth piece from the set is the first one to introduce plucked strings and partial harmonics to the pianist. In *In the Lowlands* presents only the pitch E4 throughout the entire work with the exception of the final pitch. Schleiermacher takes full advantage of the strings inside of the piano and the fingers of the pianist to produce his desired sound effects. The same pitch is produced nine different ways. Stability and tempo control are required in this slow piece and precision while playing on the strings inside the piano.

The dynamics of the piece focus on the extremities, *forte* and *piano*, *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*, *pianississimo* and *fortississimo*.

In Example 7.1, we find half of the first page of the piece; it is important to notice the *rubato* and slow tempo marking. As described in Chapter 3, with all the nontraditional techniques used in the *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano*, it is important to isolate and understand the composer’s markings and their appropriate meanings, as seen here in the context of the piece:

Example 7.2. Schleiermacher, *In the Lowlands*, mm. 1-5.

The first indication of *pizzicato* (bar 1) should be executed with the nail plucking the string of the piano near the pins; the second marking (bar 2) should be played with the flesh of the right-hand fingertip near the pins. Bar 4 informs the pianist to play the *pizzicato* near the middle of the string. The end of the first line has a square notehead that should be muted on the string of the piano, as executed previously for the first time in *In the Slate Mountains*.

One of the most exciting sections of this piece is finding the harmonic partials by lightly touching with the fingertip at a certain point on one of the bass strings. The diamond-shaped notes also mean that the notated tone is to be played as a harmonic. This requires the pianist to listen to each tone carefully for pitch accuracy. At the beginning, marking the precise nodal point on the string where the written partial should be found with a thin strip of non-adhesive painter’s tape is highly recommended. It is important to use only materials that will not harm the inside of the piano.

In the following example notice the *flageolet* indication below:
Example 7.3. Schleiermacher, *In the Lowlands*, mm. 11-17.

In Example 7.3, the left hand plays the notes written for the bass clef, while at the same time the right hand lightly presses the E string with the flesh of the fingertip, finding the second partial. The second partial sounds one octave above the notated pitch. The nodal point for the second partial is found by dividing the string in half. It is at the halfway point that the harmonic will sound an octave higher. Likewise, the third partial is found at any point where the string is divided into three equal sections, the fifth partial divided into five, and the seventh into seven. The third partial sounds one octave and a major fifth higher, the fifth partial sounds two octaves and a major third higher, and the seventh partial sounds two octaves and a minor seventh higher. In bar 20 the fifth and seventh partials are played simultaneously, resulting in two different qualities of sound when producing the E4. The partial produced on the F1 (sharp) string has a darker quality than the one produced on C2. One of the particularities of *In the Lowlands* allows the pianist the opportunity to explore different layers of the E4 through this technique. A pianist may find this specific bar fascinating because of the novelty of producing two partials at the same time. This opens the door for both the teacher and performer to discuss subtle sound differences through the practice of this piece during the piano lesson.

The following section of the piece alternates between the fifth and seventh partials as seen in the following example:
Here are the composer’s ideas about this piece:

“Only the tone E is heard (save for the last note), albeit always somewhat differently colored or modified through the use of different techniques and, especially through harmonics. Just as there is no 100% geographically flat lad in nature, here, too, there are slight “changes of altitude.””

Schleiermacher’s idea of having different geographic images of the land in mind makes the E4 waver slightly in pitch and timbre, aiming for that image efficiently. Thus, there are numerous ways of producing the E4 through various plucking techniques, muting, and producing harmonics on different strings inside the piano.

Any pianist who wants to learn this piece must first only read the score, without playing it, as if trying to locate a destination on a map. This composition grows thematically, giving the impression of a pacific sound landscape, until it reaches a surprising climax with the last and only different note of the piece: C sharp.

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Example 7.5. Schleiermacher, *In the Lowlands*, mm. 40-46.

After reading the score, the pianist should only play the notes and rhythms metronomically at first in order to give a solid structure, before adding the nontraditional elements inside the piano. Otherwise, the performer may be distracted from the correct intent of the composition, and it may be more difficult to correct misreadings of the score. The next step should be locating the middle E string of the piano and practicing with the right hand for a while by plucking the string with the fingernail near the pins (pizz. v.N.). The same procedure should be practiced, but this time by plucking the string with the flesh of the fingertip near the pins (pizz. v.).

The last *pizzicato* to be practiced consists of plucking the string near the middle of the string behind the strut (pizz. M.), still with the flesh of the fingertip. Next, the pianist should practice the only four muted notes that are written in this piece (dampen) with the correct articulation played by the left hand.
One of the most meticulous and challenging tasks for the pianist is to be able to find how to play the harmonics on the strings. This will vary, depending on the size, brand, and model of the instrument since the placement of the struts in the frame is not standardized. This should be practiced carefully by moving one’s upper body and right arm from the bench to the specific points inside the piano. When performing the entire piece, the pianist must become accustomed to the different places and motions necessary while finding the partials (Ftg.). The first partial has been introduced after a *pizzicato* (bar 11), and the performer must be ready to move an octave lower inside the piano using a different technique on the string.

It is important to accommodate the music desk and the score on the lower side of the piano where the bass strings are located, so one can read and practice comfortably. These sessions should focus on getting used to the feeling of playing inside the piano, rather than pretending to play perfectly from beginning to end.

Generally, feeling comfortable should be the premise while paying attention to the different sound effects that *In the Lowlands* offers. This includes the unusual marking of sustaining the damper pedal from the beginning to the end of the piece. In addition, the pianist should practice each measure, adding the correct dynamics and accents as written, while moving slowly toward the desired tempo with *rubato*. 
CHAPTER 8

In der Höhle/ In the Cave

This piece is full of mysterious and enigmatic passages, as one imagines a dark cave to be. Schleiermacher’s use of imagery and sudden surprises in this thirty-one measure composition invites both the performer and the audience to experience the sounds that being in a cavernous space surrounded by only rocks and water could evoke. When the listener attends to this composition, one cannot ignore the echoes and dripping water that are so clearly expressed.

Familiarizing oneself with clusters is something that not every pianist or audience has the interest or curiosity to listen to and to learn; that is, how to appreciate a combination of sounds that are stacked. Moreover, it is an additional challenge for the performer to become comfortable in front of an audience while playing them.

This piece is written in three staves, using the bass clef in the two lower staves and treble clef in the upper staff. The middle range of the keyboard is used less. Extremities – lower and higher pitches – are more typical in this composition.

*In the Cave* presents three main themes: the first is presented by the clusters in the lower notes (bars 1-7) as shown in Example 8.1. At the beginning of the piece both forearms have to silently depress two sets of clusters, the left on the white keys and the right on the black keys in the same octave. After carefully depressing these keys, the pianist presses the sostenuto pedal.

The score indicates the lowest pitch of each cluster, as well as its rhythmical value. The left hand will always play on the white keys and the right hand always on the black keys. Depending on the length of the hands of the pianist, each cluster might be smaller or larger. The length of each cluster is notated rhythmically by either quarter or half notes, except for one surprise sixteenth note (bar 13) and the last two measures of the piece, where two eighth notes and a single whole note are written.

As Example 8.2 shows, the second idea is melodic and only uses C, D-flat and E. Beginning in the second system (bars 8-9 / 14-15), the right hand dampens the same pitches on the strings inside the piano.

Example 8.2. Schleiermacher, *In the Cave*, mm. 6-10.
The third idea has a shorter and more precise rhythmic pattern, referred to by Schleiermacher as “dripping”, and it has a pronounced articulation by using staccato notes. The melodic material presented in the higher register of the piano is more varied compared to the previous themes. Also notice one of only two sections in the piece where Schleiermacher suggest the use of the damper pedal (bar 16-17) as seen below:

Example 8.3. Schleiermacher, *In the Cave*, mm. 11-17.

Schleiermacher integrates the three ideas in different order throughout the entire piece, making it challenging for the pianist to react on time to travel across the strings, to the clusters and to the keyboard (bar 13), as shown in Example 8.3. Another example of how the three thematic ideas combine involves the physical choreography of the pianist. In the following example, the chords mix with the “dripping” in different measures (bars 13, 23, 27) of the piece, alternating some surprising elements, as seen below:
Example 8.4. Schleiermacher, *In the Cave*, mm. 21-27.

One of the fascinating aspects of *In the Cave* is the resourceful use of the sostenuto pedal, as has been mentioned before. From the beginning, because of the sympathetic vibrations, all the different atmospheric sonorities and effects can be heard through the resonances, echoing from beginning to the end, creating the descriptive images and mysteries of a cave. Rhythmically, the piece’s predominant time signature is 5/4, but it alternates to 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4.

Schleiermacher’s thoughts on this piece are:

“Echo affects abound, heard in short outbursts and in rapid figures that disappear into the depths of the cave. One should pay attention to the regularity of the dripping and to the different “dripping speeds”.

Learning this piece thoroughly involves exploring every aspect of what the composer has written in order to achieve the desired atmosphere of depicting a cave-like environment with the highest artistic interpretation. Therefore, the pianist should learn *In the Cave* by being intentional

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about the three musical ideas that comprise the entire work, starting with the third thematic idea that is written in the higher register of the keyboard and the second section of the piece where the damper pedal has to be used. Other challenges are presented in specific sections (bars 11-12, 16-17, 19-20, 23, and 27-28). By isolating and practicing these measures, one need not worry about playing inside the piano but should focus instead on precision with the rhythm and the timbral energy that those passages require as a contrast to other sections of the piece. Here is an example of that contrast:

![Example 8.5. Schleiermacher, In the Cave, mm. 28-31.](image)

The next two sections to learn will be the first and second lines of the piece (bars 1-11), where the clusters and the dampened notes inside the piano should be played. It is imperative to get used to playing the clusters with the palms of the hands on the white and black keys, taking into consideration the notated pitches as a starting point for both hands. In this regard and for practice purposes, it is recommended to play only the lowest note of the cluster, while counting the metric value of the notes. For a while the pianist will be able to feel and hear the written notes to better discern the basic structure of the first theme. When two thematic ideas overlap, moving quickly to one part inside of the piano or across the keyboard, it is helpful to approach these passages by practicing routinely and very slowly, while thinking in “direct lines.” This
means that going from one key to a string should be considered as one continuous physical motion rather than two separate body movements.

This piece does not require any explosive approaches; rather, it demands the pianist to search for efficient sonorities within the dynamic range specified by Schleiermacher. The recreation of an ethereal environment that transports the audience to being *In the Cave* must be the premise.
CHAPTER 9

Am Gebirgsbach / At the Mountain Brook

Different mountain brooks have smaller or larger water courses; sometimes the terrain can be hilly, while other portions may flow more gently. The sounds vary as the movement of the water and the landscape fluctuate. As the water runs along, many different elements can be found in the aquatic environment and its surroundings. The same happens with *At the Mountain Brook*, where the pianist may encounter surprises in the melodic line, as one will find while hiking beside the brook. The fast tempo of this piece will require the pianist to be attentive to the articulation and to the overall flow of the piece.

The time signature varies, and the grouping of the beats alternates from measure to measure. The left hand depresses the diamond-shaped note heads silently, and there is no pedal marking indicated in this piece, except for two measures (bar 20, 30).

The lowest point of the melody for the right hand is G3 (bar 7), occurring in both a descending and ascending pattern. The second section of *At the Mountain Brook* begins at bar 20, where a full measure has three beats of a rest for the right hand. This is also the first time the damper pedal is indicated, sustaining the held C3, so it can be heard throughout the next section before the left hand silently depresses five white keys in the low part of the keyboard, as seen here:

![Example 9.2. Schleiermacher, *At the Mountain Brook*, mm. 17-25.](image)

During this second section, Schleiermacher moves the right hand to the bass clef (see Example 9.2, bar 20) and a descending pattern starts from bass C down to F. Near the end of this pattern, notes are being removed. The next phrase pattern imitates, with the same notes, but now in ascending order, which concludes that brief section, as seen here:

The resonances of the left hand should be heard throughout the whole piece. The art of this piece involves precisely letting the pitches of the left hand that are silently depressed vibrate and be heard, with the preparation of these resonances serving as a bridge between the first and second sections (bar 20). The cluster in the left hand serves to echo the diatonic pattern of the right hand and is the first time the left hand holds five notes simultaneously.

In the following section in bar 30, the left hand depresses only a fifth that is written an octave above the cluster until other notes are added (silently), while the right hand accents the descending and ascending pattern with the addition of an *acciaccatura*, always doubling the essential pitch at the octave all the way to the end of the piece.

The way that Schleiermacher uses the sympathetic vibrations in *At the Mountain Brook* is clever because it leads the pianist to use these resources gradually by starting with only one pitch and subsequently adding one more at a time with the left hand.
Example 9.4. Schleiermacher, *At the Mountain Brook*, mm. 31-51.

The composer finishes *At the Mountain Brook* with what one could consider a *codetta* (bars 47-51).

Schleiermacher’s ideas about this piece refer to how it works:

“The left hand is to be played silently throughout the piece. The keys must thus be depressed very cautiously: while the tone should not be heard, the strings vibrate freely so that one can hear the resonances. The right hand should be played loud enough to make the sympathetic vibrations audible.”

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From a learning perspective, *At the Mountain Brook* is a piece that a pianist can practice playing for the first time by playing the notes of the left hand audibly, instead of depressing them silently, in their rhythmic context. It is essential to practice it this way because the left hand will have to silently use substitute fingerings. This happens mostly on the second page (after bar 32). Throughout the first page, the left hand depresses descending and ascending combinations of notes from G2 through C3, until reaching the cluster (bar 20), see Example 9.1 and Example 9.2.

The right hand starts on the C pentascale, adding one note at a time in a descending pattern while playing *staccato*. The advantage of the articulation notated is that the pianist can play that accented single note, or as Schleiermacher calls it the “main tone,”19 with the thumb, giving it more strength with the heaviest finger of the hand.

Defining effective fingerings from the beginning of the learning process is vital, and this piece should not be an exception to the rule. Practicing slowly without accents, and even playing *legato* at first, can be constructive to internalizing the rhythmic groups between the quarter and eighth notes, thanks to the frequent meter changes. Later on, adding the accented single notes, and then the *staccatos* while playing the left hand, will get the pianist some steps closer to the desired final result. This process can be repeated by increasing the tempo and attempting to play *leggiero* and *forte*. The last step while learning this piece should be practicing without hearing the left-hand notes but listening carefully to the sympathetic vibrations.

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CHAPTER 10

In der Burgruine / In the Castle Ruin

The last piece of the set using non-traditional techniques inside the piano is In the Castle Ruin. This is a composition that has been composed with gestures for the purpose of recreating the landscape of a fortress in rubble. This is one of the pieces that presents a strong influence of some of Henry Cowell’s compositions such as Aeolian Harp, written in 1923. The types of sounds, glissando and pizzicato, could relate to Cowell’s work. The pianist will have the challenge of recreating Schleiermacher’s soundscapes and of taking the audience on this visit to an aging edifice.

Written in 3/2, this short piece offers the pianist eight different ways to produce different sonorities inside the piano within thirty-four measures; Schleiermacher’s tempo indications are very slow, rubato.

The first measure indicates to the pianist to silently depress two sets of clusters in the lowest octaves of the piano; white keys for the left hand and black keys for the right hand, while depressing the sostenuto pedal through the entire piece. This allows sympathetic vibrations to be heard. In the next two measures (bars 2-3), the left hand silently depresses three augmented chords. At the same time, the right hand executes a *glissando* with the fingertips near the middle of the strings inside the piano, while connecting each *glissando* with the damper pedal. At the end of the first line (bar 3-4), the fingernail of the right hand scrapes each of the notated strings lengthwise. Dampening the strings (bar 8) happens at the end of the first section of the piece. The marking *a tempo* suggests the beginning of the new phrase, and new sounds are introduced, as seen here:

Example 10.2. Schleiermacher, *In the Castle Ruin*, mm. 10-18.

As if stonework were falling from the castle, a *fortissimo* dampened note must be played on the lowest key of the piano, followed by an indication of “hit the bar with a flat hand” inside the piano; the palm of the hand should knock on a strut. At the end of that line, a *pizzicato* is
indicated to be played with the fingernail on the highest C of the piano, almost giving the impression that water is dripping from the ruins.

On the second page, a slight variation (bar 24) of the glissando appears. The right hand now strums the glissando with the fingernails to produce a louder and more metallic sound; see the following example:


A new sound, both sudden and loud, is notated in bar 29. The pianist knocks on the strut with a piece of metal - for example, a small pipe - for the quarter note duration. At the end of *In the Castle Ruin*, after bar 29, the performer’s task is to diminish the intensity of the previous phrases by taking one to a brief recapitulation of the opening glissandi passages and scraping the last note of the piece, which is a low E flat. The castle is left once again alone and in peace. Refer to Example 10.4 below:
Example 10.4. Schleiermacher, *In the Castle Ruin*, mm. 31-34.

Learning this piece can present a conundrum when approaching it for the first time because the unfamiliar notations may be off-putting. In addition, there is no traditional playing on the keys, as all sounds are produced inside the piano. The courageous pianist should not be hesitant when approaching the task of performing this piece for the first time. Schleiermacher has indicated meticulously in the score as an architect would draw a blueprint which sound effects the pianist should bring out of *In the Castle Ruin* with the hands.

From a creative point of view, Schleiermacher’s thoughts about *In the Castle Ruin* are:

“It is the witching hour, when the piano turns into a haunted, ruined castle, and where ghostly noises are heard in a ghoulish atmosphere. The clock strikes midnight.”

One of the most important aspects in studying this piece is to first learn it by maintaining a strict pulse in the 3/2 meter. Preparing and finding the notes inside the piano that have to be dampened on the strings or the ones that have to be played *pizzicato*, as well as finding the strings that have to be scraped, is of extreme importance. Meticulously mapping these elements inside the piano will lead one to visualize and understand which and how these internal resources will be employed. The first step in mapping the interior of the piano involves using non-adhesive stickers to label the string pins to find dampened notes quickly. The author suggests marking

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only the black keys so that the tones can easily be found according to their groupings of two or three black keys. Strings that will be scraped or plucked can be found by similarly marking the dampers according to the black-key groups. To find specific nodal points, as suggested before, thin strips of painter’s tape can be used to mark the appropriate divisions, allowing the performer to easily find the various harmonics.

One must take care to maintain the integrity of the rhythm and the tempo throughout the piece. Taking liberties with the tempo will lead to a lack of precision rhythmically. The consequences for not being accurate at the outset will present greater challenges while learning the piece. Although the rhythm appears to be simple, given the physicality of what is required by this piece, one should approach the rhythm in an orthodox way.

Another important step is to play all the possible notes written in the score on the keyboard, as suggested for other pieces in this document. In this way, the pianist can have an idea of which harmonies the piano is going to produce and, therefore, become familiarized with the flow of the composition. One should exclude the first two clusters (bar 1) because in this measure the pianist is silently depressing the two cluster groups and then pressing the sostenuto pedal to sustain the open strings. As mentioned before, these are sympathetic vibrations.

When knocking on the frame, one must consider that not all piano frames are built the same way, and the struts vary in their location across the harp. Therefore, the placement of struts could be a problem where strums and harmonics occur. The pianist must strive to adapt when practicing or performing on different instruments. If this is something that one encounters while learning the piece, transposing the composition may be necessary.

Practicing each non-traditional technique inside the piano will be the next step in learning the piece. This can be done by practicing one line at a time with the correct use of the pedal and
by exaggerating the dynamics indicated. While finding the correct tone and sonorities, deciding how much weight the arm of the pianist applies towards the plucking, scraping, strumming and dampened strings and percussive sounds on the struts, the desired result that will suit the character of the piece may be achieved.

After choreographing all the gestures in and out of the piano with precision, and being able to perform the piece, all the different indications affecting the tempo can be added such as: *rubato* and *ritardando*. Finally, both the performer and the audience can enjoy lingering amongst the moss and the stones to contemplate the history of the dwelling.
CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSION

Steffen Schleiermacher is an eminent musician who has been true to his musical ideas and convictions. As an unpretentious maestro that has developed the interest of rescuing forgotten avant-garde composers such as Alexander Mosolov (1900-1973), Arthur Lourié (1892-1966), Nikolai Roslavets (1880-1944) from the twentieth century that have been lost in history, he shows other musicians the endeavors that one has to pursue to make artistic justice when duty calls.

Schleiermacher’s Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano represents his interest in keeping extended piano techniques alive. These brief pieces pose an opportunity for intermediate and advanced pianists to appreciate these musical idioms which were not prioritized in the classrooms of more traditional musical conservatories. Not following any current trends other than writing music for the purpose of creating images through knowledge and experience, Schleiermacher has created artistic and pedagogical value with the pieces that have been discussed in this document. Therefore, these may serve as a tool for many piano teachers that have not yet found the correct repertoire in the vast piano literature to teach students how to produce different sounds inside the piano with one’s own fingers, hands and arms. Also, it is hoped that these short piano pieces will be an attractive addition for those seeking pianistic alternatives for enjoyment in the concert hall to surprise and delight future audiences.

Many composers during the twentieth century, such as Henry Cowell, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, Leo Ornstein, developed their own musical languages in spite of being sociologically and historically connected. The premise for many of them was to be faithful to contemporary musical art forms during relatively short periods of
history throughout the century when many dramatic and painful events occurred. This impacted those generations who were nurtured by those who witnessed exile, massacres and wars, and who respected the wiser generation of artists who came before them. The Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music in Germany, which was established in 1947 after the war, became an important center for philosophers, artists and musicians who gathered to share new music with the younger generations of intellectuals in one of the most respected and iconic centers for contemporary music. This was a golden period where composers from the United States exchanged musical ideas and premiered their latest works with their colleagues from central Europe and vice versa. Steffen Schleiermacher was a music prize recipient there.

The value of exposing students to different musical styles and particularly to the practice of performing piano literature from living composers should not feel like an obligation to piano teachers, piano students and performers. The common practice during the nineteenth century was to perform repertoire from the living Romantic composers. Liszt, Chopin, Brahms, Schumann, Mendelssohn and others often used to play their music for each other with other audience members in attendance. The production of music in the twenty-first century continues with even more resources that in the last century; technology has made it possible for composers and performers to engage in interactive concerts and compositions through the use of graphic and electronic devices. This is not the case with Schleiermacher, since he only composes for acoustical instruments. The premise should be why not program a recital or a concert with repertoire from living composers. The variety of styles that audiences will be exposed to from living composers will grow if this is taken into consideration while selecting performance repertoire. With his *Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano* Steffen Schleiermacher leads one to

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think that teenagers with an available instrument will find learning this repertoire an unexpected adventure by getting involved with the mechanics of the piano, by exploring the resources that a pianist can produce from inside of the instrument. For a moment one can imagine that if a piano teacher had suggested during the early years of training that, as a pianist, you could have the opportunity to be a percussionist or a harpist for some measures in a new composition to be studied, by using different elements inside of the piano. Humans learn and grow by experiences. The notation of different extended piano techniques and how to execute them in the instrument can be learned by the more frequent experiences the pianist is exposed to. These experiences will also lead performers to the practice of discerning from different situations how to integrate the knowledge they have acquired during practice and make decisions during the interpretation of the pieces. One might even reach out to living composers for suggestions in interpreting their works, exchanging feedback through video recordings, since geographical distance is no longer a barrier to timely communication. In this regard, the eminent pianist and pedagogue Aloys Kontarsky (1931-2017) reminded us that “the meaning of symbols used by composers has changed over time – and even within the works of a single composer – and their interpretation ultimately resides with performers”.22 The art of creating a musical interpretation in Schleiermacher’s Twelve Soundscapes Inside the Piano resides in adjusting the effects until the composition is ready to convey the composer’s printed message in performance.

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