

Notes on the “Estudios Sencillos” by Leo Brouwer

Terminology

1. Purpose
2. Tempo
3. Technique
4. Character
5. What not to do


Estudio 1

1. Development of the right-hand thumb (*p*). Each left-hand finger moves freely and independently.
2. Fast (comfortable tempo)
3. Concentrate on the right-hand (without stiffness)
4. Rhythmical. Think in two “orchestral” levels; emphasize the bass
5. Don’t play the accompaniment too loud (*im*)

Estudio 2

1. Homogeneity in the chords (not one string distinguishes from the others)
2. Lento “ma non troppo” MM $\downarrow = 44$ – $\downarrow = 48$, solemn
3. Study in two ways: p.i.m – i.m.a
4. The dynamics and colours behave according to harmonic tension. The chord with tension is to be played as follows:
a - stronger (or *p*) b - arpeggiated c - different colour d - with ritenuto
5. Don’t play so slow that legato becomes impossible (*cantabile*)

Estudio 3

1. Preparation for tremolo
2. Light, fast but legato $\downarrow = 76 / 96$
3. Make the melody in the top-voice sing
4. Flexible dynamics “wave-like” 
5. Rhythmically not too rigid

Estudio 4

1. Study for the half barre, the thumb, and variable metre (5/4)
2. Moderato Cantabile. Sempre legato
3. As preparatory exercise the chords can be played in its “entirety” with the thumb
4. Lyrical (sing the melody of the bass in your mind or with your voice)
5. Take care not to deform the “barre” to a violin-position

Estudio 5

1. Rhythmically complex arpeggios. Based on afrocuban folklore
2. Movido, but not too much $\downarrow = 88$ – 100
3. Let everything vibrate (like a harp) without accents, not staccato
4. The rhythm is not the main subject, but the harmonic progression
5. Do not take Latin “staccato” as an example

Estudio 6

1. To use all possible arpeggio-formulas (improvise)
2. $\downarrow =$ ca. 112 – 132
3. Concentrate on mixing and/or using different formulas for the right-hand
4. Speed is not the most important aspect, but playing the different right-hand formulas at the same tempo, use dynamics
5. Be careful for stiffness in the right-hand

Estudio 7

1. Slurs for the left-hand with emphasis on finger 4 (weak finger)
2. $\downarrow = 168 - 184$
3. Make slur so that force is created without stiffness (relax left-hand fingers immediately)
4. Rhythmical and light
5. Don't spread the left-hand fingers too much.

Estudio 8

1. Two part polyphony: the thumb sings against arpeggios
2. Tranquilo e sempre legato
3. $\downarrow = 80$ (Middle section: Piu Mosso $\downarrow = 138$ min.)
4. Hommage to the Byzantine "Bicinia" (medieval hymn in two voices)
5. Don't play so slow that contrapuntal imitation becomes unnoticeable

Estudio 9

1. For slurs in fixed positions
2. $\downarrow = 108 - 130$
3. Independence of each left-hand finger
4. Rhythmical
5. Don't concentrate only on slurs, but also on the good execution of the fixed position itself.

Estudio 10

1. Independence of left-hand. Continuous crossing of strings in right-hand
2. $\downarrow = 100 - 116$
3. Difficulty right-hand: consistent playing of right-hand fingering
4. Ritmico energico (Quasi Toccata)
5. It seems like a study for the left-hand but it is a study for the right-hand

Estudio 11

1. Left-hand slurs and fixed position for legato-playing
2. $\downarrow = 120 - 132$
3. Concentrate on the fingers in fixed positions (Independence of other fingers)
4. Rhythmical but constantly legato and cantabile
5. Avoid a too fast tempo

Estudio 12

1. For playing legatissimo and contrary motion
2. Tranquilo $\downarrow = 76$
3. Continuity and equalness of three voices in the "chorale"
4. A "strange" Sarabande (Hommage to the renaissance-dance)
5. Let all resonances and vibrating tones of the chords sound

Estudio 13

1. For double-slurs (singing bass - "thumb")
2. Moderato e Ritmico
3. Left-hand: one fixed finger while others are moving (independence)
4. Bass stronger. The topvoices are on a second level (background)
5. The double slurs are usually played with too much force. Don't forget the fingers in fixed positions by focussing on the double-slurs

Estudio 14

1. For slurs (left-hand) in *p* cantabile
2. Movido (moving) More lyrical than rhythmical
3. The topvoices should not sound louder than de bass (the slurs quiet)
4. Lyrical without emphasis on the rhythm. Gradual dynamics
5. Don't confuse the continuous pulse with rhythmical "staccato"

Estudio 15

1. Three-note chords legato
2. Sarabande with variations $\downarrow = 60$ with flexibility in the Piu Mosso
3. Try maximum legato
4. Homage to the rhythm of the “pre-classical” Sarabande. Rhythmical
5. Be careful for the bad habit of playing rhythmically without legato

Estudio 16

1. For ornamentation in baroque-style (preparation for the French Overture)
2. $\downarrow = 56 - 60$
3. Maintain the “grave/maestoso” character
4. The French overture exaggerates the punctuated rhythm ($\downarrow \uparrow \downarrow = \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow$) Sober character
In the Double (m.12-15) play the repeated elements with flexible timing
5. Avoid, in this section (double), a rigid rhythm

Estudio 17

1. For ornamentation
2. Tempo I°: $\downarrow = 80$ Tempo II°: $\downarrow = 92$
3. Develop the independence of the weak “left-hand” fingers through barré
4. Legato. Homage to “baroque” practises
5. Don’t let the overall tempo of the piece be influenced by hasty ornamentation.

Estudio 18

1. For double ornaments
2. Serene and legato. Even better: Lento y Grave
3. Develop the trill played with three fingers (left-hand 1,2,1,3,1, etc.)
4. The contrast in colour and intensity depends on the dramatical character
5. Don’t rush (remember: solemn character with fast ornamentation)

Estudio 19

1. For widening the range of dynamics (chords)
2. Allegro legato, constantly stable
3. Balance in resonance of the chords and slurs
4. Rhythmical. The harmonically complex chords should be played clearly
5. Don’t arpeggiate all the chords

Estudio 20

1. For the clearness of slurs
2. Veloce (Middle section $\downarrow = 122 - 144$)
3. Develop the speed and articulation
4. “Minimal” etude. Repeat ad libitum, accentuate the “new” (added) element the first time
5. Pay attention to the resonating “open strings”. Take care not to overshadow the clearness