

## Tenuto ties and slurs in Chopin's Etudes

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**Abstract:** Chopin's autograph slurs can be read musically in several ways, particularly in relation to their varying lengths. Among these, his Etudes op. 10 and op. 25 present three written instances of an open slur-like or tie-like curve starting from a gesturally strong upbeat but ending well before and far from the ensuing note, in each case a downbeat indicated *p*. Two of the instances launch an Etude. Editions have habitually ignored these or treated them as slurs to the ensuing note. This article considers them in musical and notational context, and argues that they can be read as open tenuto ties, the upbeat to be sustained and considered as polyphonically distinct from the ensuing downbeat. A corollary appears in the A minor Etude op. 25 no. 4, where Chopin's autograph slurs extend beyond long notes ending several legato phrases, the slur usually ending in mid-air at or just before the completion of the long note's notated duration. Rationale is argued again in terms of finger tenuto, the slurs covering the duration of the long note to be held over staccato accompaniment. In a few bars of this Etude Chopin even drew a similar slur over the sounding extent of just a single sustained note, sometimes duplicating a tie over the barline; these are argued as related both to the extended slurs and to the "tenuto ties" from upbeats.

**Keywords:** Chopin, Etudes, legato, slur, tenuto, tie

### TENUTO TIES AND SLURS IN CHOPIN'S ETUDES

Chopin's slurs and phrasing have long fuelled study and debate.<sup>1</sup> His manuscripts and first

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<sup>1</sup> Two seminal studies are Higgins (1966; notably pp. 37–59) and Meniker (2001; notably pp. 17–43, comprising Chapter 2, "The slur in Chopin's works"). While Meniker warns against "regard[ing] Chopin's slurs as phrasing marks" (p. 18), he then discusses various Chopin slurs in apparent terms of guiding the performer's phrasing and

editions show slurs deployed and written in various ways (and with varying degrees of clarity, as we'll see), readable according to the logic of their context. The main variability lies in their length. The shortest ones, often covering just two notes, can be read in the classical manner as strong-weak, breathing at the end; these are manifest in the opening section of the E major Etude op. 10 no. 3, as marked up in the manuscript Chopin submitted for engraving.<sup>2</sup>

A longer version can be seen in slurs that cover definable musical phrases: ranging from a few beats to a few bars, again they suggest breathing at the end, sometimes with a lift of the wrist according to accounts of Chopin's teaching.<sup>3</sup> This type of slur articulates the A-flat major Etude op. 25 no. 1, as well as the C-sharp minor Etude from the same set, in which slurs for each hand sometimes run in counterpoint. Such slurs were still a newer notation in Chopin's time, reflecting a shift that occurred in Hummel's and Beethoven's generation towards legato as a norm of articulation, rather than the *détaché* of Mozart's time. Although legato can be read as Chopin's norm, the fact that the stylistic shift was still in progress around him can account for his many admonitory *legato* markings.<sup>4</sup>

Related to Chopin's *legato* indications are his long *spianato* slurs that sometimes cover an extended musical paragraph, or even an entire section or short piece, without breaking at normal breathing points: as per the word *spianato*, they imply a smoothly undisturbed line or texture. A prime example is Chopin's A-flat major *Nouvelle Étude*, published in 1840 with a single *spianato* slur spanning the entire piece.<sup>5</sup> (His op. 22 *Andante spianato*, ironically, is articulated by shorter slurs.)

Awareness of those distinct functions can help us make sense of two related and unusual notations that have consistently been ignored or altered in print. The first of them, which appears in three (possibly four) of Chopin's Etudes, can be seen in Figure 1, showing the opening of the E major Etude op. 10 no. 3 in Chopin's final autograph, which served as engraving copy (*Stichvorlage*) for the French first edition of 1833.

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articulation, notably in the B-flat minor Nocturne op. 9 no. 1 (pp. 28–32 and 77–91). A salient point there is that many of the shorter slurs convey inflections that punctuate or run across the formal or syntactic phrase structure (what Higgins calls “units of poetic thought”: 1966, p. 47). I am grateful to John Rink and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on early drafts of the present article, along with some kindly volunteered help regarding music examples. Music examples are courtesy of PL-Wmfc, PL-Wn, Robin Lehman and US-Nypm, their sources online at [www.polona.pl](http://www.polona.pl), [www.gallica.fr](http://www.gallica.fr) and <http://corsair.themorgan.org>.

<sup>2</sup> The manuscript has more of these short slurs than the first edition; both versions are shown in the 2023 Peters critical edition of op. 10 (EP 73227). Regarding Chopin's adherence to their classical connotation, see Eigeldinger (1986), p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> See several accounts of this in Eigeldinger (1986), p. 45. Wrist motion would apply most aptly to this type of slur (rather than the short gestural slurs mentioned earlier).

<sup>4</sup> “Legato playing was by no means automatic in Chopin's time, although it was becoming more fashionable” (Higgins, 1966, p. 43).

<sup>5</sup> In Chopin's autograph the slur breaks in the middle of bar 16, marking where the right hand's repeated octave A flats start to act enharmonically as G sharps, as the central section sideslips into E major.



Figure 1. Opening of Chopin's Etude op. 10 no. 3, autograph *Stichvorlage* (PL-Wmf: M/192).

The most immediately startling detail in this extract is the tempo heading *Vivace ma non troppo* (rather than the first edition's *Lento ma non troppo*), an issue explored in the preface to the 2023 Peters critical edition of the op. 10 Etudes (EP 73227). More subtly remarkable is the placing of the *p* dynamic at the barline (that is, taking effect after the initial upbeat), preceded by our main focus of interest here: a slur-like curve from under the initial upbeat that appears to lead nowhere. In this form the piece's opening is generally unfamiliar, because the 1833 first edition – which was very poorly engraved – ignored the slur-like graphic and printed the *p* under the opening upbeat.<sup>6</sup> Virtually all editions since have followed suit.

Three newer editions have acknowledged the graphic. Paul Badura-Skoda's 1973 Wiener Urtext edition, Gábor Csalog's 1995 Könnemann edition and Jan Ekier's Polish National Edition of 2005 all render it as a slur to the immediately ensuing right-hand E (with *p* placed under the opening upbeat, thus reversing the order of the two signs). To some extent that interpretation is understandable: many of Chopin's slurs and ties are hastily or roughly drawn, and it has long been commonplace for engravers and editors to rationalise where they start and end, in line with longstanding engravers' tradition that slurs and ties should always start and end at a note. But here a slur to the E makes little if any musical sense, its end marking an articulation break (with all that would imply by Chopin's norms) midway through the word *legatiss[imo]*.<sup>7</sup>

Possible clarification comes from the A minor Etude op. 25 no. 4, whose surviving autograph begins the piece with almost a vertical mirroring of op. 10 no. 3 (Figure 2). Once again an opening anacrusis on the dominant (this time accented) leads to a tonic resolution marked *p*, passing from the strong to the weak end of the hand. (Although Chopin specified no fingering in Figures 1 or 2, maybe because it seemed obvious, his norms in such layout would imply 2–5, or feasibly 2–4 in Figure 1.) Again the upbeat here is double the value of the ensuing units of articulation, the sounding tempi of the two examples arguably not

<sup>6</sup> As noted later in this article, the inept engraving of that edition diverted Chopin's attention at proof correction to urgent remedial issues (see the critical commentary to the Peters edition of op. 10); he also probably no longer had his *Stichvorlage* manuscript to hand.

<sup>7</sup> That logic evidently occurred to the editors of the 1949 "Paderewski" edition, which renders the graphic more freely as a slur extending to the F sharp midway through bar 1.

dissimilar (given Chopin's heading to Figure 1). In Figure 2 Chopin's graphism is clearer, tracing what appears to an open horizontal tie from the initial upbeat, again ending just before the barline. Drawn with visible care and showing no sign of haste, it strongly suggests a tenuto instruction, possibly even stretching the upbeat marginally, certainly to sustain it at least for its complete notated value – something that was not an assumed norm in the late classical practice in which Chopin was educated. Given the sense there of a horn-like “all aboard” summons,<sup>8</sup> the notation suggests an admonition not to treat the upbeat in the older manner of a detached string up-bow. If the graphic in Figure 1 is read equivalently, it supports the “legatiss.” indication there, rather than contradicting it.

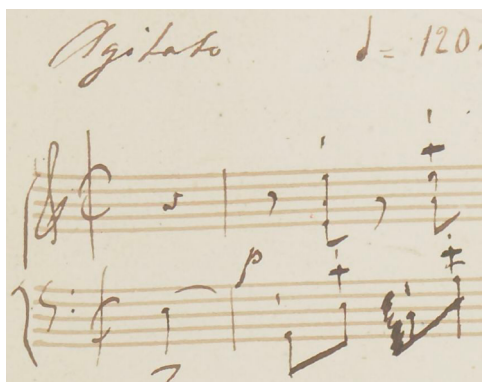


Figure 2. Etude op. 25 no. 4, opening, autograph *Stichvorlage* (F-Po: Rés. 50 (2)).

As with Figure 1, the open tie of Figure 2 is unfamiliar to most readers, because the 1837 French first edition printed it as a slur to the ensuing bass A, as virtually all editions have done since. The one other surviving manuscript of op. 25 no. 4, a copy by Chopin's factotum Julian Fontana that served for engraving the first German edition of 1837, shows Fontana prevaricating by slightly extending and slanting the tie downward to end over the staccato wedge above the bass A, leaving it readable as either an open tie or a slur. (Ironically, the German edition engraved from that manuscript levelled the tie out again, a notation that a few subsequent German editions conserved.)<sup>9</sup>

Between these comes our third instance, in the *molto agitato* F minor Etude, op. 10 no. 9. At the end of bar 20, a quaver upbeat in a *forte* dynamic is followed again by a *subito p* downbeat an octave higher, again moving from the strong to the weak end of the hand. Chopin's *Stichvorlage* autograph shows a roughly written tie-like appendage under the upbeat, very like that of Figure 1, again ending before the barline. The ensuing slur in bar 21 is clearly separate, starting from the mid-bar grace notes (logically enough, given their repetition of the preceding E flat).

<sup>8</sup> That opening gesture is something of a Chopin hallmark: in the Etudes alone it launches op. 10 nos. 3, 7, and 10 (see also nos. 4, 8 and 11) and each of op. 25 nos. 1–5.

<sup>9</sup> Unlike op. 10, whose German and English first editions were engraved from proofs for the French edition, the French, German and English first editions of op. 25 were all engraved from different manuscript sets (hence the Fontana copy). The English edition, whose source is lost, places *p* at the upbeat with a slur from there down to the A. Surviving early sources can be viewed online via the OCVE option at [www.chopinonline.ac.uk](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk) (as accessed in March 2025).

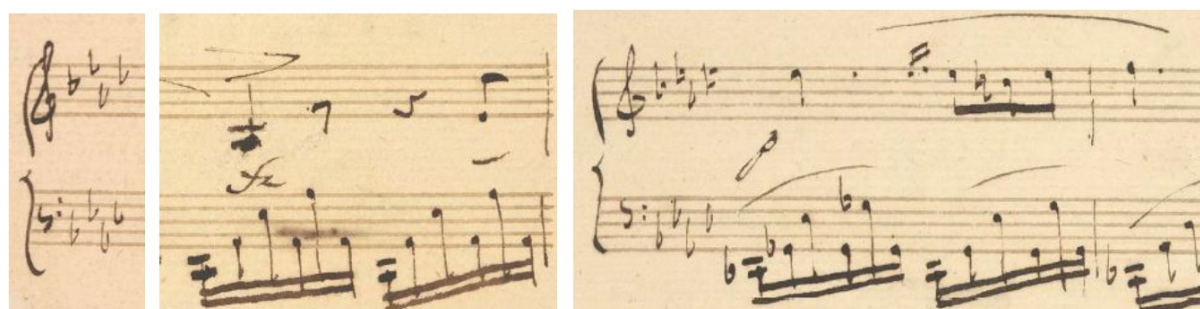


Figure 3. Etude op. 10 no. 9, bars 20–22, autograph *Stichvorlage*, spanning a change of page (PL-Wmfc: M/196).

A complication here is the manuscript's page break after bar 20 – page and system breaks being a standard location for inadvertent discontinuities, as all editors know. Did Chopin intend the tie (or slur) fragment that ends bar 20 to be carried over in bar 21? The French first edition, engraved from that manuscript, takes him surprisingly at his word (Figure 4), equivalently over a system break, printing an open tie just at the end of bar 20 – though it then slightly muddies the water by starting the right-hand slur from the first note of bar 21.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 4. Etude op. 10 no. 9, bars 20–22, spanning a system break in the French first edition (M. Schlesinger, 1833).

Anyone who saw this passage only as it appears in Figure 4 might conclude that Chopin's intention was a single continuous slur from the last quaver of bar 20 onwards. That was what was printed in the 1833 English first edition, whose source was a proof for the French first edition. Many later editions followed suit, including the 2005 Polish National Edition (without editorial comment, even in its detailed online commentary). A few editions have compromised by treating the tie as a slur up to the ensuing high E flat, ending where the (ensuing) slur in Figure 4 begins. That last option, indeed, is musically plausible, particularly if the ensuing slur starts from the grace notes, as in Figure 3.

We might thus wonder how much it matters whether we read the examples above as open ties or slurs (even if Chopin appears to have carefully avoided writing them as slurs), given that either interpretation entails holding the upbeat for its full value. An answer comes from Chopin's preparatory draft of the Etude just discussed (op. 10 no. 9), a manuscript that has been available for study for some decades. Bars 20–21 appear there in slightly variant

<sup>10</sup> This can safely be read as an engraver's misreading rather than a change by Chopin at proof stage: any slur thus amended on engraved plates would show distortion of its curve.

form (Figure 5), the upbeat to bar 21 a crotchet rather than the quaver of Figures 3 and 4, after a possible *pp* (barely legible) in the middle of bar 20. The ensuing tie to the barline, however, is incontrovertible as such. In sum, both manuscripts of this piece show the tie and ensuing slur as disparate entities, separated horizontally in one manuscript, vertically in the other.



Figure 5. Etude op. 10 no. 9, bars 20–21, preparatory draft (Robert O. Lehman deposit, US-Nypm).

Additional interest in Figure 5 comes from a lower-octave right-hand E flat at the beginning of bar 21, which effectively turns the tie into a tie-over, the lower octave polyphonically overlapping the upper one. A very close analogy can be found in the E-flat minor Etude of op. 10 (no. 6), where bars 4–5 take the right hand up the same E-flat octave over the barline, with the same lower-octave tie-over (Figure 6), a passage that then recurs verbatim in bars 12–13 and 44–45. (The stronger *f* dynamic at the barline there might explain that passage's explicit right-hand tie-over.)

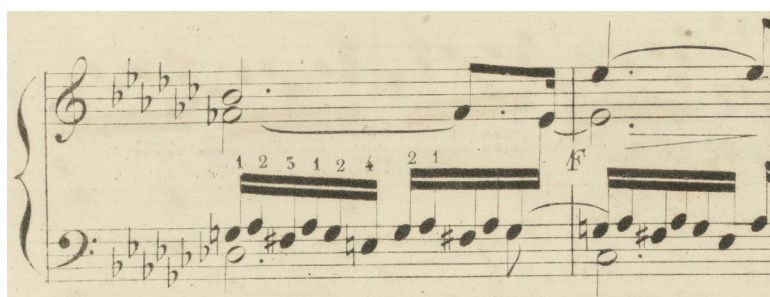


Figure 6. Etude op. 10 no. 6, French first edition, bars 4–5 (repeated at bars 12–13 and 44–45).

We can now only guess if the early manuscript's added lower-octave E flat (beginning bar 21 in Figure 5) was omitted in Chopin's final version (Figures 3–4) by oversight, or just because he thought it unnecessary to spell out. As it is, the omission leaves his exact intent there less than clear, and the early draft's lower octave offers editors a solution to the ambiguity: the 2023 Peters edition accordingly includes it (in parentheses, to flag it as an import from a secondary source). The distinction between slur and tie then becomes clear (a slur connects notes in a single voice, while a tie-over defines overlapping voices).

Whether legato overlap can be similarly assumed in Figures 1 and 2 may be debated, but it would chime well with their dynamics and textures: we may particularly note the almost immediate repetition of the upbeat's pitch in each case, as if the upbeat effectively launches two polyphonic lines at once. In Chopin manuscripts it is not unusual for a tie or slur to end somewhat short of its obviously intended destination (or sometimes beyond it, as we're

about to see); the consistent way those in Figures 1–4 end before the barline, though, could be read as Chopin’s way of indicating not to read them as slurs that connect notes.

If read thus as open tenuto ties, Figures 1–4 partly prefigure a later usage by composers including Debussy and Ravel, who used open-ended ties to indicate *laissez vibrer* (notes held over indefinitely on the pedal). Chopin’s usage more probably conveys finger tenuto (physically holding the note for its sounding duration, though it could also involve pedal, which Chopin by all accounts used generously). Open ties to designate finger tenuto were in fact a long-established notation, dating back to unmeasured preludes from the seventeenth century. Chopin’s usage here may be read as an alternative notation to the double stemming he often wrote for finger tenuto, each notation used where the context is graphically most conducive.<sup>11</sup> Whatever Chopin’s source for them, open ties cease to appear in his later works, maybe because he found them insufficiently understood by engravers to be reliably printed.

For contextual completeness a debatable fourth case should be shown (Figure 7), from the A-flat Etude that opens the op. 25 set. The only open-ended tie to have been printed as such in a modern Chopin edition prior to 2023 (the 2005 Polish National Edition),<sup>12</sup> it appears only in Chopin’s *Stichvorlage* autograph, as a thin curve that oddly runs through the last two noteheads of bar 43 before ending in space after the barline. The first German edition, engraved from that manuscript, ignored it.<sup>13</sup>

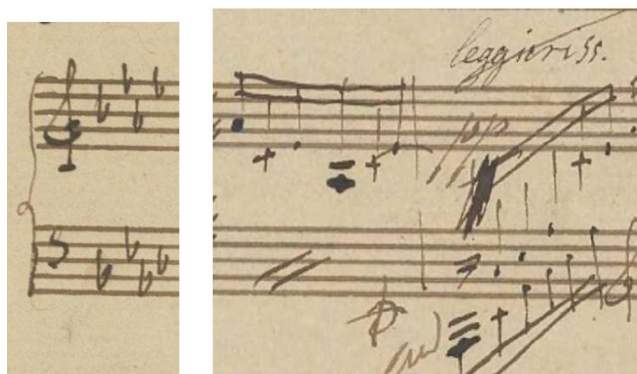


Figure 7. Etude op. 25 no. 1, bars 43–44, autograph *Stichvorlage* (PL-Wn: Mus. 217).

The problem here lies in finding a purpose for it: although the 2005 Polish National Edition prints it as an open tie (from the A flat, curving downward rather than upward to avoid the ensuing noteheads), its irregular autograph placing leaves it looking graphically and musically dubious, even before we consider how the A flat in question could be held while the right thumb moves down for the low C. (Chopin’s pedalling rules out catching it instead on the

<sup>11</sup> Chopin’s use of double stemming for finger tenuto mostly appears within figurations (for example, crotchet stems inside quaver or semiquaver groups), as in the Etudes op. 10 nos. 3, 7 and 10 and op. 25 nos. 6, 9 and 12, sometimes extending the held duration over a barline. Tenuto ties there would be graphically impracticable, just as double stemming would serve no useful purpose in Figures 1–5 here.

<sup>12</sup> The year 2023 is quoted here because of the Peters critical editions of Op. 10 (2023) and Op. 25 (2026), the former already mentioned in relation to Figure 3, and the latter of which reproduces the open tie of Figure 2.

<sup>13</sup> The engraving material for the first German edition of op. 25 comprised autographs of two pieces along with non-autograph copies of the other ten, hence the role of both Figures 2 and 7 here in that edition: see the critical commentary to the Peters critical edition of op. 25, or that of the 2005 Polish National Edition.

pedal, given the piece's lively tempo.) In short, this instance may just be an accidental remnant from an abandoned idea, possibly involving the deletion visible after the barline.<sup>14</sup>

Or might any of Figures 1–5 and 7 have simply resulted from an accidental brush of Chopin's pen? That could explain Figure 7, but not Figures 2 and 5, given their clarity of graphic intent, an element that thereby supports Figure 3 – and by extension Figure 1, given the unanimity of musical gesture linking Figures 1–5. (We can also rule out Chopin's nib running out of ink in mid-stroke: such occurrences leave paper indentations visible on close inspection that don't appear in the present instances.)

The other notation central to this article affects the A minor Etude, op. 25 no. 4, and arguably throws considerable light on Figures 1–4. This Etude is characterised by a melodic top line that alternates unpredictably between staccato and legato (the latter under slurs), over a constant staccato accompaniment, the right hand playing constantly off the beat until the last three bars. Most of the legato segments complete themselves cadentially on a long note – a dotted crotchet in bars 12 and 50, a double-dotted minim in bars 16 and 32. In Chopin's autograph (the same one as features in Figure 2 above), the slurs over these phrases extend well past the final long note stem to cover the note's full sounding duration, usually ending high above the last staccato quaver dyad of the bar (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Etude op. 25 no. 4, bar 12, slur as in Chopin's autograph (F-Po: Rés. 50 (2)).

Chopin's notation graphically conveys how the long note is held over the staccato dyads (and pragmatically released with the last right-hand dyad of the bar). He even wrote a similar, technically redundant slur over the sounding duration of the double-dotted minim C in bar 30 (Figure 9) – and again over the similar sustained right-hand A in bars 54 and 56, where the A is then tied over the ensuing barline (the slur thus technically duplicating, and certainly emphasising, the tie).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Close inspection suggests that Chopin's deletion was of a premature start to the semiquaver beams, possibly involving a (now virtually illegible) initial right-hand semiquaver A flat on the lower staff. Even that couldn't be assumed as a tie-over (especially given the right hand's shift from upper to lower staff there): Chopin habitually notated tie-overs with a short tie immediately before the tied-over note rather than from the initiating one. An earlier autograph of that Etude indicates bar 43 just as a repeat of bar 42 (matching Figure 7 here note for note but without any tie-like curve): see the facsimile in Binental (1930), plate 62. Although that early manuscript was lost in World War 2, fortunately its entirety was photographically reproduced in Binental (1930, plates 55–58 and 60–62, comprising op. 25 nos. 2 and 1 respectively).

<sup>15</sup> The duplication of slur and tie is less graphic in the autograph, where each tie is written in abbreviated form,



Figure 9. Etude op. 25 no. 4, bar 30, Chopin's autograph with a single-note "tenuto" slur (F-Po: Rés. 50 (2)).

As often, Chopin's graphism is not completely consistent. In bar 16 of the autograph the slur ends just a quaver after the double-dotted minim stem (that is, somewhat short by this manuscript's norms); in bar 32 his slur conversely runs "long", overshooting the barline at the end of a system. It's thus doubly telling that Fontana's copy of the piece shows these very two inconsistencies corrected, apparently by Chopin in the course of checking and revising Fontana's copy – certainly so in bar 32 where Chopin's extension of the slur is immediately visible (Figure 10). (Typically, Chopin omitted to carry either of those adjustments over to his own autograph.) The Fontana copy also shows the same extended slur notation at bar 18, the slur apparently added by Chopin and ending over the last quaver dyad of that bar. (The autograph manuscript instead continues the equivalent slur into bar 19.)



Figure 10. Etude op. 25 no. 4, bars 15–16, manuscript copy by Julian Fontana (PL-Wn: Mus. 217), slur extended by Chopin.<sup>16</sup>

Although Chopin often let slurs run some way past the last note of a phrase,<sup>17</sup> the (literal)

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starting just before the barline. The ensuing melodic slur in each of bars 55 and 57 then starts from or just after the dotted crotchet tie-over of the A (many editions instead join the two slurs, as the original French edition did). Fontana's copy instead has a longer slur from the A in bar 54 to the A in bar 56.

<sup>16</sup> Fontana's musical hand uncannily resembles Chopin's; the most visible distinction is that Fontana's downstems consistently run from the left of the notehead, Chopin's from the right.

<sup>17</sup> In various copies by Chopin's other main copyist, Gutmann, slurs often run from barline to barline, a graphism difficult to confirm as Chopin's because most of the corresponding autographs are lost (though a surviving autograph of Chopin's Ballade op. 38 bears gory witness to Gutmann's inaccurate copying of it: see the OCVE option at [www.chopinonline.ac.uk](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk), as accessed in March 2025). In some autographs Chopin's slurs conversely start or end short of all notes they are clearly meant to cover (see notably the commentary to Etudes 8 and 11

extent of that feature in op. 25 no. 4 seems designed to convey that Etude's unusual texture and articulation (a point underlined by Figure 9 above, the slur applying to just a single note). The original editions rendered that notation patchily at best, curtailing some of the slurs to end at the final note of their phrase, and conversely extending others to join the ensuing slur.<sup>18</sup> Until the 2020s, the Polish National Edition of 2005 came closest to respecting Chopin's extended slurs in this piece (though not the opening tenuto tie), partly anticipated by earlier Henle and Wiener Urtext editions. In each of them some ambiguity results from a tendency of the printed slurs to dip down at the end, as if leading to the final lower-voice quaver dyad under the melody. That in turn might be seen as an illustration of how difficult some manuscript notations are to implement in print.<sup>19</sup> The 2026 Peters edition of op. 25 (EP 73228, in press) prints as exactly as possible Chopin's manuscript graphism of slurs in this Etude (and its opening tenuto tie).

How might Chopin's extended slurs in op. 25 no. 4 relate to the tenuto ties discussed in the first part of this article? Most immediately, the single-note slur in Figure 9 (along with those in bars 54 and 56) suggests exactly the same connotation as the open ties of Figures 1–5, indicating the duration (or minimum duration) to hold the note. The extended slurs also act as both slurs (over the notes they link) and tenuto ties (extending over the held duration of the last note in the phrase). That notational polarity can be more clearly sensed from the respective French terms for slur and tie, *liaison* and *tenue* (the latter literally *tenuto*, "held"). The less clear graphism seen in Figures 1 and 3 above (from op. 10) also comes into clearer focus if compared with the extended slur ends in op. 25 no. 4: the shared element, even allowing for occasional vagueness in Chopin's pen strokes, is that they mostly end just before a barline, charting how long a note is to be physically held.

A broader question arises of whether other works by Chopin throw light on the examples seen here. The single-note slur of Figure 9 is indeed matched by similar slurs in Chopin's G-sharp minor Prelude op. 28 no. 12, flagging dotted minims to be held over volatile quaver motion in bars 21, 22, 25 and 26; these are faithfully reproduced in both the Polish National Edition and the 2003 Peters edition by Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger. Zvi Meniker proposes voicing implications from a few similarly extended slurs in the B-flat major Prelude (no. 21) from the same set (slurs he describes as "open-ended", though their end clearly defines sounding phrase ends, as in op. 25 no. 4).<sup>20</sup> As for up-beats, the tied-over opening upbeat of Chopin's C-sharp minor Waltz, op. 64 no. 2, is clearly of the same genre as those in Figures 5–6 here; more subtly, the way its pitch is carried through the ensuing bar relates to how the opening upbeat in Figures 1 and 2 has its pitch reiterated through the ensuing bars.

Harder to find are any other open ties like those of Figures 1–4: so far I have seen just two contexts that could imply one, albeit impossible to verify as their autographs are long lost. One of them opens the C major Mazurka posthumously published by Fontana in 1855

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in the Peters critical edition of op. 10).

<sup>18</sup> This again attests to an old engraving rule that slurs should start and end at a note. Unusually, the French first edition of this Etude came nearest to maintaining Chopin's manuscript notation.

<sup>19</sup> For a recurring case of such difficulty in Debussy's piano *Image* "Mouvement", see the critical commentary and facsimiles in Howat, ed. (1991).

<sup>20</sup> Meniker (2001), p. 89.

as op. 67 no. 3 (Figure 11a).<sup>21</sup> Its oddly disjointed slurring in bar 1 instantly prompt a query of whether the printed slur from the opening upbeat might be corruption of an opening tenuto tie (then an intended slur from the top E, matching bar 3). A similar query arises with the opening of the second Mazurka in that posthumously published set (Figure 11b), given the odd isolation of its initial printed slur, then the lack of a matching slur over the barline into bar 4.<sup>22</sup> Analogies with Figures 1–4 above also include the location of the *p* dynamic after the barline (though some caution is needed here, as Fontana's 1855 editions probably embodied some editing and markings of his own). While the loss of those pieces' autographs thwarts any firm conclusion, the query can be useful to consider when performing them. Perhaps most tellingly, no known Chopin autographs show an opening slur of that sort, linking a dominant upbeat to just the ensuing downbeat of a longer melody (the structural element common to our Figures 1, 3–5 and 11).



Figure 11. Chopin Mazurkas published posthumously as op. 67.  
a. Opening of no. 3, French first edition, Meissonier, Paris, 1855.  
b. Opening of no. 2, same edition.

One other element has long skewed our perception of Chopin's phrasing. As with many composers, his manuscripts and early editions are rife with slurs that he forgot to complete after a page break or system break – or occasionally vice versa, when a new system or page carries over an assumed slur that he forgot to start on the preceding system or page. In accordance with printing convention, engravers tended to tuck in such fragments to start or end at the nearest visually convenient note, often regardless of musical sense. (Sometimes engravers introduced the same problem by missing part of a slur before or after a system break.) Editions have addressed that situation only perfunctorily over the years, leaving numerous discontinuities that have tended to mask any perception of possible tenuto ties left

<sup>21</sup> The opus numbers were introduced in the German version of this publication, which was engraved from proofs for the French edition. The French edition was probably engraved from copies made by Fontana.

<sup>22</sup> Fontana's edition dates the C major Mazurka to 1835, the G minor one to 1849, without citing evidence.

open by design.

Somewhere in between comes one revealing instance of a *slur* whose end Chopin appears to have left open by design. In a surviving corrected proof of the Etude op. 10 no. 2 (Figure 12), Chopin inked a slur above the second half of bar 18, carrying it past an end-of-system barline. Some added fingering having overwritten the slur, Chopin rewrote the slur under the notes, again extending it well past the last semiquaver, as if to be carried over the system break. Instead of continuing it in bar 19, though, Chopin just wrote *sempre legato* there, as if to say “continue the slur indefinitely.” (The issue may have arisen because the proof shown in Figure 12 left insufficient space to write that above bar 18.) In line with engraving convention, the first edition ended the slur at the last semiquaver of bar 18, as editions have done since, no publisher having yet been willing to let a slur be continued by a verbal instruction.<sup>23</sup> Nor can Chopin’s own intention there be regarded as unequivocal, for a presentation autograph of that piece, which Chopin copied out around the same time as he marked up the proof shown in Figure 12, shows clearly separate slurs over each of bars 18 and 19, with an accent above the first semiquaver of bar 19.<sup>24</sup>

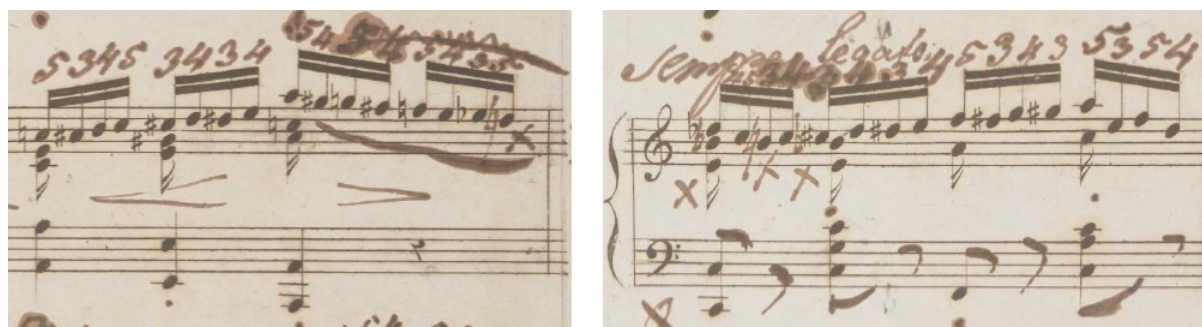


Figure 12. Etude op. 10 no. 2, bars 18–19, proof corrected by Chopin (F-Po: Rés. 50 (4)).

In practice both ways of articulating that passage are viable, just as the upbeats in Figures 1–2 above have survived adequately in the forms habitually printed since the 1830s.<sup>25</sup> That variability also helps explain Chopin’s apparent failure to rectify the details seen above in the course of correcting proofs, a task that diverted him to the more urgent issues of addressing endemic engraving defects (often in visible terms of damage limitation), plus practical details such as adding fingering throughout op. 10 no. 2. That acknowledged, we nonetheless benefit from observing how carefully Chopin tried to convey in manuscripts what appear to be salient aspects of his writing and playing, elements that have a particularly valid place in critical editions.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> A decision in the Peters critical edition of op. 10 to maintain the first edition’s reading there, and to leave the graphic of Figure 1 above unprinted, was made at series editor level.

<sup>24</sup> S-Smf: MMS 399. I heartily thank the staff of the Stiftelsen Musikkulturens främjande (Nydaahl Collection), Stockholm, for their warm welcome some years ago in letting me study and explore the Chopin manuscripts and instruments in the Foundation’s collection.

<sup>25</sup> A surviving early draft of op. 10 no. 3 (Robert O. Lehman deposit, US-Nypm) presents Figure 1 without any tenuto tie, slurs or dynamics, under the more succinct tempo heading *Vivace*.

<sup>26</sup> To ascertain other possible nineteenth-century use of open ties would require a separate wider-ranging study of manuscripts. Much of the usage discussed in this article appears particular to Chopin (even Fontana appears not to have grasped its basis) and specific to the character of certain pieces. Printing conventions by nature lag

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behind composers' notations, and Elaine Gould's observation that "New compositional techniques of the mid-twentieth century stimulated notational experiments and innovation" (Gould, 2011, p. xiii) holds equally for interpretative and technical developments of the nineteenth century. Exploration of how open ties and their usages evolved would involve another separate study, but in brief, by the 1900s some publishers (such as Durand in Paris) permitted the printing of open ties ending just before a barline (in the manner of Figure 2 here); see Gould (2011, p. 72). That convention in turn proved inadequate for Debussy's and Ravel's post-1900 manuscript usage of open ties over barlines, signifying *laissez vibrer* pedal into or through an ensuing bar: resultant corruptions in print include the loss of an entire tied-over bar in the 1910 first edition of Debussy's piano Prelude "Les collines d'Anacapri". As late as the 1980s it took some negotiation with the music typesetters of the *Œuvres complètes de Claude Debussy* to rectify these and carry Debussy's open ties over barlines, as he consistently notated them (see the critical commentaries to *Œuvres complètes de Claude Debussy*, series 1 vols. 3 and 5, Paris, 1991 and 1985). Ravel's similar usage is respected in post-1990 Peters editions of Ravel piano music edited by Roger Nichols.