CLEMENTI - FIVE PIANO SONATAS

ALBERT WONG - PIANIST

Sonata in D minor / D major (18:10)
Opus 40, No. 3 [1802]

1. Adagio molto - Allegro (8:07)
2. Adagio con molta espressione (4:52)
3. Allegro (5:11)

Sonata in B minor (15:33)
Opus 40, No. 2 [1802]

4. Molto adagio e sostenuto - Allegro con fuoco, e con espressione (7:56)
5. Largo, mesto e patetico - Allegro - Tempo I (Molto Adagio) - Presto (7:37)

Sonata in C Major (14:26)
Opus 37, No. 1 [1798]

6. Allegro di molto (6:15)
7. Adagio sostenuto (4:02)
8. Finale - Vivace (4:09)

Sonata in B flat Major (10:50)
Opus 24, No. 2 [ca.1781]
(a.k.a. Opus 47, No. 2)

9. Allegro con brio (3:47)
10. Andante quasi Allegretto (2:59)
11. Rondo - Allegro assai (4:04)

Sonata in A Major (9:10)
Opus 33, No. 1 [1794]
(a.k.a. Opus 36, No. 1)

12. Allegro (6:15)
13. Presto (2:55)

Total Time: 68:51

Producer: Michael Rolland Davis
Engineer: Ed Thompson
Original 24-Bit Master

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Muzio CLEMENTI
Five Piano Sonatas

11-year-old
Albert Wong

IVORY CLASSICS

⁂ Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) ⁂

Clementi's works have been published under a confusing array of opus numbers. The numbering of the sonatas here follows Alan Tyson's *Thematic Catalogue of the Works of Muzio Clementi* (1967).

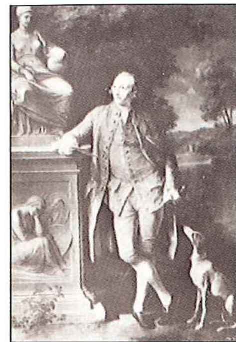
Any musician who earns the appellation "The Father of the Pianoforte" certainly commands immediate attention. Clothed in this mantle fairly early in life, Muzio Clementi invites both admiration and conjecture. In a recent talk by the American pianist Michael Habermann (a longtime Clementi devotee), the nail was hit on the head when he described the current prevailing perception of Clementi: *"Listeners should just stop defining Clementi as being a lesser version of his famous contemporaries. If at times he seems to lack the lightness of Haydn, the symmetry of Mozart, or the forcefulness of Beethoven, it is certainly not because of inadequacies. Quite simply, he was a composer with different aims and a different musical character. Once that reality is accepted, his unique qualities emerge and his presence becomes as vital as those of his more celebrated colleagues."*

Muzio Clementi

Beginnings

He was baptized Mutius Philippus Vincentius Franciscus Xaverius Clementi the day following his birth in Rome on January 23, 1752. The oldest of seven children, his brother Gaetano was a musician and his silversmith-father a music aficionado. Muzio's talent appeared early, so no time was wasted in getting him to Antonio Buroni (1738-92), a choral master at St. Peter's, for training. At age six he was doing sol-fa, at seven studying thorough bass with the organist Cordicelli, followed by work under the castrato-soprano Santarelli and possibly the counterpoint-expert Carpini. The child wrote an oratorio and possibly a mass (lost), and at thirteen he secured the post of organist in his home parish of San Lorenzo in Damaso. But it was the

young teenager's proficiency at the harpsichord one day that significantly determined his destiny, when Peter Beckford (1740-1811), a young Englishman on visit to Italy in 1766, was staggered by the boy's keyboard abilities.



Portrait of Peter Beckford by Pompeo Batoni, 1766

Life in Dorset

Beckford – though hardly as wealthy as one of his ancestors in Jamaica who had made a fortune with his sugar plantations – acquired by inheritance a commodious manor house at rurally isolated Steepleton Iwerne in Dorset. This country squire knew the "best" people and in 1768 became a Member of Parliament. True to Beckford's lifestyle, the estimable Italian painter Pompeo Batoni executed a life-size portrait of him; John Smart painted a miniature, he being the leading practitioner of this fashionable genre; and Beckford commissioned a portrait of his wife, Louisa (née Pitt), from none other than Sir Joshua Reynolds. An avid traveler and sports enthusiast, Beckford's practical and insightful books on hunting (1781, 1805; reprinted many times) remain to this day as standard works on the subject; they are so detailed that, as for example, the *names* of close to 800 of his foxhounds are listed (though the poor fox was never baptized). It was into such an elevated milieu that Muzio Clementi was to find himself by 1767.

Beckford offered to Muzio's father to take the lad into his household for a period of seven years, for which quarterly payments to the father would be made; the agreement was confirmed by signed contracts. As to his years at Steepleton, we can only conjecture whether he was formally taught music, languages, or the social graces and whether Beckford brought him into the household mainly to play for his aristocrat friends, conforming to the expectations of his class and the age; nor do we know how Clementi interacted with others. In later years, Beckford himself referred to the arrangement as one in which he "bought" (his term) the boy from his father. It should be remembered that back then, under the law, parents *owned* their children; Muzio's lot might best be regarded as that of an apprentice of sorts. (By the way, A. Henry Higginson, who also wrote extensively on the hunt, published a biography of Beckford in 1937.)

Details of the Dorset years concerning Muzio reveal only that he spent long hours practicing the harpsichord. Among the adults, though, we find some muddy waters: Peter's wife had an affair with the former's notorious, eccentric, enormously rich cousin, William Beckford – author of the classic gothic novel, *Valthek* – who exiled himself abroad for several years after the charge of sexual misconduct with a young fellow. Add to this pot-au-feu that both Peter and William were married with children, that Clementi's attempt to elope later in 1784 was foiled, that he married twice (1804 and 1811) and begat five children, that various wives died in childbirth, and we find enough palpable substance about life in merrie olde England to motivate the script for a present-day television soap opera.

Adulthood, London and Beyond

Released from his seven-year stint with Beckford, Clementi relocated by 1774 to London, a city that was bubbling with music and musicians of the highest order. He had practiced the works of Johann Sebastian and Carl Philipp Bach, Handel, the two Scarlattis, and Pasquini, and was well prepared to play the harpsichord in public; then, he was engaged as "keyboard conductor" at the Kings Theatre. His Six Sonatas, Op. 1 (dedicated to Peter Beckford) were under his composer's belt, but it seems that it was the Sonata, Op. 2, No. 2 (not published until 1779), nicknamed the "octave lesson," that caught the public's fancy for its intrinsic display element. Clementi also astounded audiences with his brilliant execution of thirds, which was then an uncommon experience, and impressed listeners as well with his gift for improvisation.

At this time the harpsichord was the predominant keyboard instrument, with the pianoforte threatening to take over due to its increased sonority, sustain pedal, and, above all else, its wide dynamic range. At first, published scores were marked "for harpsichord or pianoforte," and use of these two instruments, both in concert and in the home, overlapped for at least a couple of decades until the piano triumphed. More than anyone else, it was Clementi who featured the new piano in recital to such an extent (and published music for the instrument that exploited its features to the hilt) that brought the piano to a zenith of popularity in England.

So successful were these early London years that in 1780 Clementi embarked on a grand, five-year tour of Europe (Paris, Salzburg, Munich, and Vienna). He performed for both a queen and an emperor – Marie Antoinette in 1780 and Joseph II in 1781 [the **Sonata, Op.**

24, No. 2, heard in the present recording, dates from this time–see details below].

The 32-year-old Clementi visited Lyon in 1784 to see Mlle. Marie Victoire Imbert-Colomés, a young lady from a good family with whom he had fallen in love (the second of his Three Sonatas, Op. 8 is dedicated to her). Marie's father thwarted their plans for marital bliss; the young suitor, after all, was but a mere performing musician, which rated a low social standing. It was reported that for three weeks *"he lived in seclusion, weeping constantly, and never going out except to the public library where he worked the entire day at mathematics..."* Some believe his music thereafter took on a more serious note.

He began teaching the very young Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858), who later distinguished himself on the concert platform and is remembered today for his excellent set of Etudes, Op. 100. The famous pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow (1830-94), in his edition of sixty of these etudes, insists that they form a vital part of every pianist's curriculum.

Clementi continued composing and publishing (up to about Opus 13 by now, including some chamber and symphonic music), and during the next five years or so he reached the peak of his fame in these activities, as well as inducing high demand as a teacher. As for his playing, here are some words of praise from a review in the *Morning Chronicle* of a concert given on February 24, 1790 at Covent Garden: *"But the performance beyond all others to astonish, was Clementi's concerto on the Piano Forte: what brilliancy of finger, and wonderful execution! The powers of the instrument were never called forth with superior skill, perhaps not equal; for however we venerate the expression of the late Schroeter, he scarcely equalled Clementi's rapidity."* [The reference is to Johann Samuel Schröter, 1750-88, Polish-born pianist, who settled in England.]

During 1791-92 and 1794-95 Haydn's visits to London temporarily "stole the show" from Clementi (does this remind you of the ins and outs of reactions to today's favorite keyboard prima donnas?) But Clementi continued writing keyboard music and three new symphonies during the next years, and his stable of pupils steadily increased. [The **Sonatas, Opp. 33 and 37**, heard in the present recording, date from 1794.] One of these was the young John Field (1732-1837) from Ireland, who later so overwhelmingly popularized the nocturne for piano. In 1798 Clementi founded Longman, Clementi & Co., which name became altered as new partners joined or left the firm. [The **Sonatas, Op. 40**, heard in the present recording, date from 1798.] Clementi probably felt the need to demonstrate success in business, rather than as a performer, in order to boost his social esteem. The firm printed and sold music and built pianos.

Other performing composer-pianists who successfully added to their income by manufacturing their own pianos (in France) include Henri Herz (1803-88) and Ignaz and Camille Pleyel (1757-1831; 1788-1855). Field was apprenticed to Clementi to work in the store and demonstrate pianos, in exchange for which Clementi gave him piano lessons – a later-day twist on the Clementi-Beckford arrangement.

Major business tour; John Field

Our star of the concert platform redirected these activities for eight years, 1802-10, to a strictly-business tour of the continent aimed at negotiating music-publishing rights (including arrangements with Beethoven for rights in Britain), as well as to the all-important pursuit of selling pianos. Clementi visited Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Dresden, Prague, Zurich, Leipzig, and parts of Italy. Field accompanied him to Russia, where the Irishman fell in with the aristocracy, made a great success composing, performing, and teaching. Despite innate laziness, plenty of booze (it must be said), sloppy as a hippie in appearance, he managed to write some divine music and remained in Russia until his dying day. Stories of the moneyed but parsimonious Clementi are now legend vis-à-vis Field, who was ostensibly under the dependency of the older master and had no overcoat to brave the glacial Russian climate; another scene pictures poor Field laboriously hand-washing his clothing; Clementi, always in the most comfortable of circumstances, just wouldn't reach into his pocket to help; perhaps he thought suffering was good for the soul. Among other well-known pupils of Clementi during this general period are Karl Zeuner, Alexander Klengel, and Ludwig Berger who taught Mendelssohn, hopefully all of whom had nice overcoats hanging neatly in their armoires.

Ill-fated marriage; a son

It was in Berlin, 1803, that Muzio's 51-year-old hemoglobin apparently started racing when he met Caroline Lehmann, an 18-year-old pianist, daughter of a choral conductor there. In one of his letters Clementi describes her as *"a most charming young lady . . . of excellent disposition, angelick temper, and universally liked and esteemed [who] has at last fixt my mercury."* However, some members of Caroline's group of poets and intellectuals frowned upon the liaison; one harshly refers to *"old Muzio Clementi . . . an abomination to us all; but unfortunately we could not*

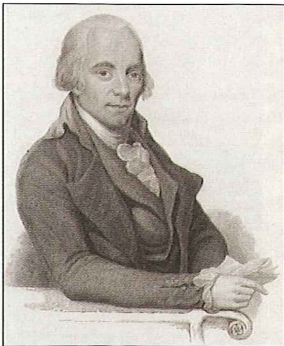
get rid of him . . . who had in mind, as it were, to purchase the penniless young girl. Her parents were for him, and the girl wavered between their encouragement and the disapproval we, her friends, expressed . . ." Fathers in those days could hardly wait to unload their unmarried daughters, who often had little say about their fate; the couple married in the following year. Sadly, Caroline died nine days after giving birth to their son, Carl, in August of 1805. The child was left with Caroline's parents in Berlin for upbringing.

Muzio Clementi

About this time Clementi began to work with the important, Leipzig-based music publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, on a new, revised, complete edition of his works – the *Oeuvres complettes.* By 1804 Clementi had already composed about sixty sonatas, so the project was a wonderful idea. Unfortunately, contact between composer and publisher became as uncommunicative as a self-muted couple with severe marital problems. One of its volumes actually includes several sonatas by Scarlatti and other Italian composers – (how does one say "major goof!" in German, I wonder.) Thirteen questionable volumes were issued; only volume VI has a clean bill of health because we know that Clementi had a direct hand in its production. The projected series was never completed.

Remarriage and children

Matters went very well, back in London, from 1810 onward. In July 1811 Clementi, now nearly sixty, remarried. The lady was Emma Gisborne, who was 26 (oddly, the exact age the ill-fated Caroline would have been). Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), the venerated musician and friend of Clementi, describes the pair in his diaries: *"[She] presents a great contrast to him; she is an Englishwoman, and as moderate and placid as he is excitable and effervescent."* They settled at Bedford Square, had four children, and remained together for the rest of their lives. In his biography of Clementi, Leon Plantinga gives some details about what happened to their children, based on the discoveries cited in Max Unger's biography, "Muzio Clementis Leben"



Muzio Clementi

(Langensalza, 1914). The fate of Clementi's son from his first marriage, Carl, is intriguingly bittersweet. Sometime in 1818 the father, being concerned about the young teenager's future, arranged for him to leave Berlin for a new life in England. Carl showed promising musical talents (of which Clementi was duly proud), but sometime around 1830 he lost his life *"by the accidental discharge of his own pistol."* He was only 25.

Skipping back, in 1813 Clementi was one of the founding directors of the Philharmonic Society and also was appointed a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music. During his trip to the continent in 1816 he presented some new works. His symphonies were heard in Leipzig and Munich in 1821 and in London in 1824. Alfredo Casella's (1883-1947) work in 1935 (as well as Pietro Spada's work that started around 1969) in reconstructing Clementi manuscripts at the Library of Congress made it possible for present generations to fully experience the orchestral music. Clementi completed his major pedagogical work, the *Gradus ad Parnassum,* in 1826.

Pedagogic Works

Wearing the hat of composer, performer, teacher, publisher, and piano-maker, it was natural – and financially profitable – that Clementi should issue instructional materials. Already available was Johann Joseph Fux's (1660-1741) "Gradus ad Parnassum" of 1725 – devoted to the study of and establishing ground rules for counterpoint – as well as excellent didactic works from France of François Couperin (1688-1723) and from Germany of C.P.E. Bach (1714-1788) on how to play early keyboard instruments. It was Clementi, though, who first published illuminating teaching materials targeted for new kid on the block, the pianoforte.

Clementi's "Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Piano Forte," first published in London in 1801, is a method in 50 "lessons" devoted to the elements of music and preliminary notations

on fingering. This popular tutor appeared in many editions and languages over a long period of time, with a revised edition in 1826. In addition to Clementi's contribution, it contains pieces by many other composers. Recommended is the reprint of the original edition that includes a new, detailed introduction by Sandra Rosenblum (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974).

Clementi's "Six Sonatinas," Op. 36, which first appeared in London in 1797, subsequently printed by many publishers, has never gone out of print. These are marvelous stepping stones, progressively arranged, to full-fledged sonatas. The first of these makes white-key scalar passages and arpeggios so much the fabric of this piece that the didactic aspects of "being taught" and of practicing tend to disappear. The slow movements of these sonatinas are of exactly the right duration for an early student's limited attention span. Later revisions of these sonatinas (even the sixth edition is by Clementi himself) are controversial as to whether or not they are "improvements." Henry Christian Timm's (1811-1892) second-piano parts to these sonatinas offer the pleasant possibility of teacher-student duets (New York: G. Schirmer, 1891).

Clementi's "Gradus ad Parnassum," Op. 44, in three volumes, was first published in Leipzig and Paris between 1817 and 1826. This major work, in the form of 100 studies, sets out to cover every conceivable pianistic device and problem in piano playing. Indeed, translation of its title alone shows the intent: "Steps to Parnassus" – think of making a long ascent to a mountain peak! It is astonishing that Clementi did not arrange the materials in a systematic progression, but Max Vogrich's later edition corrects this failing (New York: G. Schirmer, 1898). Unfortunately, in the edition of Liszt's pupil Carl Tausig (1841-71), the selection of 29 of these studies includes only the driest of exercises and omits all the best pieces from Clementi's third volume (some of Clementi's greatest keyboard writing). Tausig's edition gave the wrong impression that the "Gradus" was nothing more than a collection of boring fingerwork; this caused the reputation of the work and of Clementi to suffer.

The piano and its music underwent a revolution in the 19th century, and updated teaching materials were needed. In 1913 the French publisher, Alphonse Leduc, issued the "Nouveau Gradus ad Parnassum" of Isadore Philipp (1863-1958), then a professor at the Conservatoire de Paris. It consists of ten volumes of 100 etudes by many composers, dealing with *"toutes les difficultés du piano."* Elsewhere, today, we find a group formed of members of the Orquesta Sinfonica of Araque, Venezuela that calls itself "Agrupación Musical Gradus ad Parnassum," as

well as a competition for wind players in Salzburg named "Gradus ad Parnassum." It's inspiring to know that steps to climb musical mountains still pervade the scene *and* remind us of Clementi in the process.

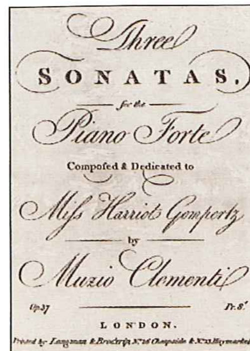
The Keyboard Sonatas

One might imagine that Clementi wrote keyboard sonatas even as a child, but none from those days has been found. Manuscripts of works written in adolescence or early manhood have been published for the first time in recent years. How many sonatas did Clementi compose? The total number depends upon how one counts, as there are some pieces that are not labeled "Sonata" but actually are just that. Although many of Clementi's sonatas are for keyboard alone, many others feature a slender accompanying part to be played by another instrument such as a flute or a violin. These pieces seem to sound well either as duets or as solo keyboard works. This raises the question of how the sonatas for keyboard should be properly counted. The total seems to be in the neighborhood of eighty, covering a period of about 55 years.

Clementi's works were published at various times with a confusing variance in opus numbers, partially due to the issuance of unauthorized and pirated editions. It wasn't until 1967, when Alan Tyson's remarkable thematic catalogue appeared, that the proper sequencing of works and their opus numbers became clarified.

Although some Clementi manuscripts may be found in archives in London, Paris, and Washington, DC, manuscripts of the published sonatas haven't turned up (excepting some early ones published within the last thirty years) – they were apparently discarded after publication. It is not possible, therefore, to pinpoint the exact dates of composition of most of these works. In this connection, it must be noted that the dates given throughout these annotations, as well as on the traycard for the present compact disc recording, are the dates on which a work was registered in Stationers Hall, the bureau in London that functioned as a copyright office and which, incidentally, has a long, stormy, fascinating history. Quite often dates of such registration follow closely date of composition – but this was not always the case.

Clementi seems to have been influenced by sonata-composer, Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757). The 2-movement scheme in some of Clementi's sonatas recalls the older composer's practice of pairing sonatas, but perhaps it is the linear, 2-part writing that links him even more so to his great predecessor.

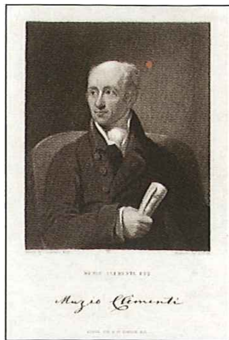


The dedicatees of Clementi's works are mostly friends and pupils, but a prominent musician's name, such as Cherubini and Kalkbrenner, occasionally turns up. As time went on, *ossia* appeared in some of the editions, in order to keep abreast of the expanding range of new instruments.

Sonata in D minor / D Major, Op. 40, No. 3, the third of a set of three sonatas, was first published in 1802 by Clementi's firm in London. Pleyel also published it in 1802, in Paris, but labeled it "Oeuvre 42," and it bears a dedication to Miss Fanny Blake. Among Clementi's friends were members of the Blake family, so she probably was one of his pupils in London. The footnotes on page 18 of Tyson's thematic catalogue detail the interesting business relationship between Clementi and Pleyel regarding this opus, as well as corrections made by Clementi to a later Viennese edition.

Following convention, keys of musical works are usually stated in accordance with the key of the opening of a piece. The present sonata makes a mockery of this convention, for only its first thirteen measures are in the minor; the remainder of the first movement is in D Major.

The introductory dramatic Adagio is notable for sharp dynamic contrasts (think of Beethoven's *later* "Pathétique" Sonata). The Allegro section that follows begins with a lovely theme (think of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Sonata), but after eleven measures reveals another personality in rustling passages that remind me of the anticipation that is created by Rossini just before the curtain goes up on one of his operas. After some working out, we come upon a highly canonic, quasi-fugato section. Motifs and fragments mix before the main theme returns. This movement ends (rather artily?) even more quietly than it began. The second movement Adagio (think of Beethoven's Op. 10, No. 3) contains a lot of 2-part writing, much of which is in the upper register. It is affectingly beautiful. Although in D minor, this movement curiously ends on a held A Major chord (not a seventh chord), as *attaca* to the next movement in D Major. The Allegro finale, overall, is fairly symmetrical, lightweight. It is replete with running, imitative passages. This is one of Clementi's longest sonatas with some enigmatic switches in mood. It challenges both the technical and the intellectual resources of the pianist.



Engraving by H. Cook, after the painting by James Lonsdale, Esq., 1833

Sonata in B minor, Op. 40, No. 2, the second of a set of three sonatas, was published as above regarding No. 3 of this set. The expressive theme of the opening Adagio begins surprising low in the piano's register, underpinned by some equally surprising thick chords in the bass (these possibly sound clearer on the old instruments than today's); its cello-like character reminds that one of Clementi's other sonatas was originally conceived as a piano concerto. A furious Allegro section in B minor follows with numerous stimulating busy passages, lurches, trills, and sforzandos. In the middle several calm measures of canon appear, which leads to an extended section with broken left-hand octaves. (It's amusing to realize how close this resembles the "walking bass" of 20th-century boogie woogie piano music.) The loud ending satisfyingly caps this movement.

The second movement alternates slow with fast sections. The charming and very intimate Largo, with its quasi-*galant* style, scotch snaps, and thin 2-part writing, seems eminently suited to the clavichord. The Allegro in 6/8 time whisks along like a scherzo. The Largo section returns, pleasantly varied, in about half its original length. The final Presto is a transformation of the earlier Allegro section. Surprisingly, and wonderfully, are thrust some powerful C major chords for two measures before the return to the fortissimo ending in the tonic B minor.

Sonata in C Major, Op. 37, No. 1, the first of a set of three sonatas, was first published in 1798 by Clementi's firm in London. The set is dedicated to Miss Harriot Gompertz, whose identity has not been established. A notable feature of the Allegro movement is the lack of running passagework. Instead, propulsion is generated by Alberti-bass figurations and the so-called murky bass (in this case broken octaves, which somewhat resemble slow timpani rolls, function as pedal points and create a sense of foreboding). Also of note is that the writing for the right hand seldom reaches the upper range of the keyboard. In fact, the earnest opening melody begins surprisingly low – on middle C, followed by the G below. In another area it's surprising to find a trill commencing on the second beat, rather than the first, with no underpinning of

Muzio Clementi in his later years by E. Hader

the anticipated dominant seventh chord until the following measure. This is but one example of how Clementi makes Mozart appear predictable by comparison! Key changes, dissonances, and a quiet ending inhabit the rest of this movement.

The Adagio, which is in F Major, begins with a noble melody, but the harmonic development in these first eight measures is restricted. As if to compensate, at measure 9 we are plunged into a striking new tonality and expanding modulations. The Vivace finale is reminiscent of a sonata of Beethoven and one of his bagatelles. It perks from beginning to end without a single *luftpause*, full of triplets and gruff accents on off beats. The left-hand triplet figuration (C-D-E) in the third and fourth-from-the-end measures, is an interesting departure from the expected ordinary C-E-G broken chord of the tonic. Again: had Mozart written this ending, he would have penned the predictable.

Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 24, No. 2 (also sometimes later published as Op. 47, No. 1) is the second of a set of two sonatas composed by 1781 but first published in 1789 by Birchall & Andrews, London, in "Storage's Collection of Original Harpsichord Music, Vol. II" (which also contains a work by Mozart). It was also published soon thereafter in Vienna by Artaria as Op. 41 and by T. Mollo & Co. as "Oeuvre 41" in a revised version (1804).

While Clementi was visiting Vienna in December 1781, Emperor Joseph II planned an amusement for his Russian guests, the Grand Duke and Duchess of Russia, and selected Clementi and Mozart to perform on Christmas Eve. The players (or at least Clementi) didn't know in advance, though, that this monarch mischievously planned the event as a contest between the two. In a letter of January 12 the following year, Mozart describes the event's musical content as follows: *"After we had paid each other quite enough compliments, the Emperor declared that He [Clementi] should begin. 'La Santa Chiesa Cattolica,' he said, for Clementi is a Roman. He started with a prelude* [meaning improvisation] *and then played a sonata. The*

Clementi and Company (6 octave) grand piano, 1822. This instrument features an innovative device known as the 'harmonic swell' mechanism which was peculiar to Clementi pianos. The harmonic swell introduced a reverberation effect which gave the instrument a fuller, richer sound. When the right pedal (along with the middle pedal) was depressed a damping bar lifted off the strings allowing sympathetic vibrations in the un-tuned non-speaking extra length of the strings to vibrate. The soundboard had to be larger than usual to accommodate a second bridge (the 'bridge of reverberation').

DIRECTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE PEDALS.

The 1st Pedal to the RIGHT is the HARMONIC SWELL, by which a continuity of sound is effected whilst the Dampers are left in their original position.

The 2d ——— lifts the Dampers.

N.B. By using the Harmonic Swell and the Damper Pedal at the same time, this Instrument gains the whole body of tone caused by the Harmonic Swell, beyond that which Piano Fortes in any other construction [illegible] produce.

Muzio Clementi & Company, London (5 1/2 octave) upright grand piano, 1816. This instrument had a timbral quality virtually identical to the English grand pianos of the time.

Muzio Clementi's memorial stone in Westminster Abbey.

Emperor then turned to me: 'Allons, fire away.' I began with a prelude as well and played variations. The Grand Duchess produced some sonatas by Paisiello (wretchedly written out in his own hand), of which I had to play the Allegros and Clementi the Andantes and Rondos. We then selected a theme from them and developed it on two pianofortes. The funny thing was that although I had borrowed Countess Thun's pianoforte, I played on it only when I played alone; such was the Emperor's wish – and, by the way, the other instrument was out of tune and three of its keys were stuck. 'Never mind,' said the Emperor. Well, I put the best construction on it I could, that is, that the Emperor, already knowing my skill and my knowledge of music, merely wanted to show special courtesy to a foreigner. Besides, I have it from a very good source that he was extremely pleased with me." Mozart omits to mention that Clementi also played his Toccata, Op. 11, but Ludwig Berger later confirmed that Mozart's description of the evening basically matched what Clementi had conveyed to him.

In the same letter Mozart unfurls this negative picture of his colleague: *"Clementi plays well, when execution with the right hand is involved. His strength lies in passages in thirds. Aside from this, he has not a kreuzer's worth of feeling or taste – in short he is just a mechanicus."* Then, nearly eighteen months later, in a letter to his father of June 7, 1783, he writes: *"Now I need to say a word to my sister about the Clementi sonatas. Anyone who plays them can hear or feel that as compositions they aren't very much. There are no remarkable or striking passages, except the sixths and the octaves; and even with those I am asking my sister not to spend* too much time, *so she will not ruin her quiet and steady touch, and lose the natural lightness, flexibility, and flowing rapidity of her hand; after all, what's the good of it in the end? – she's supposed to do the sixths and the octaves with the greatest speed possible, which is something no one can do, not even Clementi himself; all she will produce is some atrocious chopping and hacking but nothing else in the world! Clementi is a Ciarlattano like all Latins.* [In one of his other letters, Mozart refers to the French as "stupid."]

He writes Presto and even Prestissimo and alla Breve on a sonata – and plays it Allegro in 4/4 time. I know this, as I heard him play – what he does well are his passages in thirds, but he sweated over those day and night in London – apart from them he has nothing to offer, nothing at all – not the slightest expression or taste, and feeling even less."

Clementi's playing at this time did emphasize the virtuoso aspects of piano playing (he was only 29), so perhaps Mozart had some justification for his viewpoint. As Mozart died in 1791, he experienced only the compositions from Clementi's early period; had he lived on, he might have altered his view and perhaps agreed with Beethoven's overwelming admiration. Clementi, though, admired Mozart's work, and exposure to it seems to have enriched his musicianship. Mozart's caustic letters were private communiqués, of course, and didn't become known until publication of Georg Nikolaus von Nissen's biography in 1828. By this time, Mozart was long since gone, but Clementi was still around, age 76.

Another confounding Clementi-Mozart connection concerns the opening theme of the Sonata in B flat Major. It so closely resembles the main theme of Mozart's Overture to his "Marriage of Figaro" (1786) that, when Clementi published this sonata in 1789, he placed this notice at the beginning of the score: *"Cette Sonate a été joué par l'Auteur devant S.M.I. Joseph II, en 1781; Mozart étant présent."* He apparently found it necessary to prove that this sonata existed before Mozart's opera and that he wasn't guilty of plagiarism. While this situation has given rise to endless conjecture by musicologists, far too much has been made of the similarity of these two works. In the first place, the theme in question of Clementi lasts for only three measures. It builds up to two sharp chords followed by an abrupt stop, and then continues in a totally different vein. However, Mozart's theme repeats the rhythmic pattern for a longer duration. This musical pattern was just basic Italianate "in-the-air" material commonly known as a "rocket theme." It was later employed by Rossini in overtures to three of his operas between 1813 and 1816 – "Aureliano in Palmira," "Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterre," and "Il barbiere di Siviglia." With a little adjustment, it can even be counted as a cousin to a motif in the *Anvil Chorus* from Verdi's "Il Trovatore" (1853). Yet, I've never seen charges leveled against these two Italians for stealing from Mozart.

The opening movement (Allegro con brio) is a neat package in classical mold of buoyant themes and lively scalar passages. Following tradition, the opportunity to insert a cadenza is

given near the end of this movement. The tune of the Andante in F Major is as directly simple as a soubrette's aria (as in an opera by Mozart!). The trill on low F leads to a harmonic surprise, and the melody purls its way through the entire register of the piano. The effervescent daintiness of the opening of the Rondo finale is reminiscent of Haydn's "Gypsy Rondo." The movement is more highly developed than Haydn's little piece, of course, and embraces a good many pianistic devices before reaching a quiet conclusion.

Sonata in A Major, Op. 33, No. 1, the first of a set of three sonatas, was first published by Longman & Broderip, London, in 1794 (later sometimes published as Op. 36, No. 1, which is really the correct number for the Six Sonatinas of 1797). The set is dedicated "To His Pupil / Miss Theresa Jansen," although an issue sometime after 1798 no longer refers to her as Clementi's pupil. This gem of a sonata is in only two movements. The Allegro begins with wonderful rhythmic ambiguity. The tune begins on the second beat of a 4-beat measure, but when the phrase is repeated in the third measure, it appears on the first beat, thus orienting our senses. The material is extremely appealing, has a lot of variety and harmonic surprise. It is among the best-crafted, most sensible efforts of Clementi. The Presto movement begins with witty 2-part canonic imitative writing, hands close together, occupying the upper register. Broken octaves, sometimes in the right hand, at other times in the left, plus a good deal of rapid passagework, serve to assure a brilliant, exciting event.

Final years

Although Clementi turned out a considerable number of works during his late period (1810-32) that were highly praised in the English and German press, at mid-1826 his composing career was largely over when he finished his *Gradus ad Parnassum.* After all, Beethoven had long become the rage, and a burgeoning romanticism was well on its way. A banquet in 1827 honoring Clementi, organized by Cramer and Moscheles at the Hotel Albion, piques our interest because Clementi himself improvised at the piano on a theme of Handel. His last public appearance was in 1828 at the opening concert of the Philharmonic Society.

In 1830, in his late seventies, he retired from his firm, and at the end of the following year the Clementi family moved to rural Evesham in Worcestershire, where, after a brief illness, the composer died on March 10, 1832 at age eighty. A contemporary obituary report in *The Original* opines, *"The retired life of this artist for some years had, in fact, been a kind of living*

death; the lustre of his works was obscured by prevailing fashion, and, we suppose, he had experienced the common and worst misfortune of age – that of surviving personal friendships and attachments formed in the vigour of life."

Funeral services at the crowded cathedral embodied a moving ceremony. From the music world the cortège included pianist-composers Cramer, Moscheles, and Field, organist-composer William Horsley, and conductor Sir George Smart, among others. By his interment in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey – an honor bestowed upon royalty and only uncommon commoners – Clementi had transcended the British class system not so much through the power of Music but by his achievements as a businessman. Yet, the inscription on the memorial stone, later installed at the Abbey in 1877, has it right: "MUZIO CLEMENTI \ CALLED \ THE FATHER OF THE PIANOFORTE \ HIS FAME AS A MUSICIAN \ AND COMPOSER \ ACKNOWLEDGED THROUGHOUT EUROPE \ PROCURED HIM THE HONOUR \ OF A PUBLIC INTERMENT \ IN THIS CLOISTER \ BORN ROME 1752 \ DIED AT EVESHAM 1832."

If Clementi were somehow able – off in that great spiritual beyond – to respond to this honor, then surely he would be confecting another of his sparkling Allegros in celebration. And, awed at the legions of piano teachers and their countless pupils who benefited from his sonatinas, he'd take special delight in Simon Dinnerstein's charming conté crayon drawing, "Sonatina" (1981), that depicts the artist's daughter Simone, at her piano, with scores by Clementi and Mozart gracing the music rack. No doubt the composer would also be smiling broadly at some satirical later-day pianistic nods to him – Claude Debussy's "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" (from the *Children's Corner Suite,* 1906-08), Erik Satie's "Sonatine Bureaucratique" (1917), Alfredo Casella's "In Honor of Clementi" (from *11 Children's Pieces,* 1920), Abram Chasins' "Gradus ad Palais Royale" (from *The Master Class,* 1925), Variation 7 of Peter van Anrooy's "18 Variations on a Well-Known Song of Unknown Origin" (1937), and Boris Blacher's "What about this, Mr. Clementi?" (from *trois pièces,* Op. 23, 1943), as well as Blacher's "Variationen über ein Thema von Muzio Clementi" for piano and orchestra, Op. 61 (1962) – all the while improvising his own accompaniment on a second piano. Such speculative images aren't necessary, though, for Clementi continues to live on in tangible reality: witness the present recording of Albert Wong – it is a splendidly enlightening *Gradus ad Clementi*!

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Pertinent Books and Scores

Leon Plantinga–*Clementi: His Life and Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Website: www.oup-usa.org). A superb biography on all counts.

Alan Tyson–*Thematic Catalogue of the Works of Muzio Clementi* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1967). A valuable, definitive guide.

Peter Beckford, Esq.–*Thoughts on Hunting: In a Series of Letters to a Friend* (Lanham, Maryland: The Derrydale Press, 2000. Website: www.derrydalepress.com)–a reprint of the original 1781edition.

The following are scholarly editions, based on autographs and/or first or early editions, and contain appropriate editorial remarks.

The London Pianoforte School, Vols. I-V and XX, Nicholas Temperley, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984-87. Website: www.routledge-ny.com). Photoduplications of earliest published editions. Vols. I-IV contain works for piano solo, Vol. V the *Gradus ad Parnassum,* and Vol. XX two early Duets for two pianos (also includes 2-piano works by John Christian Bach, Dussek, Steibelt, Cramer, Potter, Moscheles, Sloper, and Stephens) in two separate parts for Piano I and Piano II.

Tutte le Composizioni per Pianoforte, Pietro Spada, ed. (Roma: Boccaccini & Spada Editori, 1982 et seq. Website: www.boccacciniespada.com) An ongoing series, to total 53 volumes, of the complete works for piano.

Opera Omnia, Andrea Coen et al., ed. (Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2000 et seq. Website: www.utorpheus.com) An ongoing series, not limited to the music for piano, to total 60 volumes, of the complete works.

Sei Arie Russe e Tarantella; Sei Monferrine; Sonata in la bemolle maggiore (1765); and *Tre Pezzi (Allegro/Allegro/Finale)* for piano solo; *Tre Pezzi (dai "Duettini")* for piano duet; Pietro Spada, ed. Early works, separately issued, published for the first time. The editor adds fingerings and suggests possible solutions of the embellishments. (Ancona-Milano: Edizioni Musical Bèrben, 1972. Website: www.berben.com).

Selected Sonatas, Vol. I (1768-1785)–WO14, Opp. 2/4, 1/2, 24/2, 7/3, 8/1, 8/3, 9/3, 10/1, and 13/6. Vol. II (1790-1805)–Opp. 50/1, 25/6, 41, 25/5, 37/2, 40/1, 34/2, and 40/2. Alan Tyson and Sonia Gerlach, ed.; Hans-Martin Theopold, fing. (München: G. Henle Verlag, 1978. Website: www.henle.com).

Piano Sonata, Didone abbandonata: Scena tragica, Op. 50, No. 3 (1821), Paul Mies, ed.; Hans-Martin Theopold, fing. (München-Duisburg: G. HenleVerlag, 1957).

A collation of Clementi's piano sonatas may be found in Groves (5th ed.) and in various editions of Maurice Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Musical Thoughts
by Albert Wong

My May 2000 Bach recording sessions were among the happiest moments in my life. I remember thinking that this is my chance to play for the whole world. (Ivory Classics CDs are distributed world-wide by Naxos.) That thought made me very happy. The recording team was encouraging – they put my mind at ease. The experience was very pleasant. Now, when I listen to those discs (Ivory Classics 71007), the music takes me back to those joyful moments. I must say that it's the best reward I have ever received.

Muzio Clementi is called the father of the modern piano. He was born in Rome, Italy, in 1752 – two years after J. S. Bach left Earth and boarded the celestial accelerator and four years before W.A. Mozart was born. Bach had courageously pioneered the art of voicing – he was the king of counterpoint voicing. Now Clementi (unlike Mozart, who stayed in the Classical form), using Bach's voicing ideals, decided to go one step further and bravely blaze the trail to the art of modulation. The freedom of modulation made his music more interesting, colorful, and therefore different from those of his contemporaries. He put a lot of humor into his compositions; he wrote quite a few – close to 200 in fact! Unfortunately, a lot of Clementi's works are much too neglected today, even though many professionals will say that Clementi's sonatas are often more challenging and interesting to play than those of his contemporary, Mozart. So here's the mystery – why is Clementi's true value still not properly recognized? Even the genius Mozart recognized his talent – unconsciously. A theme from Mozart's "Magic Flute" was borrowed from Clementi's B-flat Major Sonata.

Although his compositions are not often performed or recorded today, his works were highly respected by Beethoven and others in his time, as well as later by the masterful Brahms (born in 1883, one year following the death of Clementi). Indeed, it is common knowledge that it was Mr. Clementi's expanded piano style that was to influence the future of piano music and not so much Mr. Mozart's. World-renowned pianists and teachers J. B. Cramer and John Field were only two of his many pupils. Beethoven assigned Clementi's compositions to his own various students. Not only Beethoven himself but his and Clementi's students, were all influenced by Clementi's style, directly or indirectly.

Besides teaching and composing, Clementi was also an important pianist and conductor who traveled throughout France, Germany, Austria, and England to perform and conduct. Besides being a teacher, composer, pianist, and conductor, he even managed find time to be the founder and president of a piano manufacturing facility (Clementi & Co.) where he made his own pianos. He made a large fortune by selling his pianos.

Even though he was rich and venerated later in life, he was not so fortunate when he was young. He was born into a rather ordinary Italian family who sold him at the age of fourteen to a wealthy English gentleman by the name of Peter Beckford. I can't imagine the feeling of being sold by your own parents! Fortunately, Mr. Beckford recognized his musical talent and didn't treat him as a slave. In fact, he helped educate Clementi in both music and academic studies. Apparently, being sold turned out to be a blessing to him. Clementi had talent but also understood that time was merciless. Therefore, he naturally didn't want to waste any part of it.

Pianists Van Cliburn and Jon Nakamatsu with Albert Wong

According to a book I read, he devoted eight hours a day just to practice on the harpsichord. Quite obviously, Clementi's success was not simply luck – it was hard work!

What impressed me most was his high E. Q. (Emotional Intelligence). He definitely had the best human skills. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been admired and respected by so many people and wouldn't have lived the successful and rich life Mozart could only dream of. He showed intelligence in dealing with his rival - none other than W. A. Mozart. He told everyone that he admired Mozart and that he had learned the noble and melodic style of his performance from Mozart. Assuming that he was not just being practical and politically polite, I believe he saw that the world was big enough for all musicians to share and that there was no need to be jealous of others. What could he lose by complimenting Mozart? It would not harm him in any way. He must have believed that no one was perfect and that one can always learn from others. It was not shameful to learn from young Mozart! He saw the merits of Mozart and learned from him. He must have had confidence in himself and in others too. Clementi lived a long and happy life; Mozart died young and penniless. Who was more intelligent? I define anyone who respects and is willing to learn from others and who can live happily without jealousy and hatred in his mind as a wise person. According to my definition, therefore, Clementi was a wise soul. He is one of my role models toward living a happy and successful life.

Clementi's positive attitude toward life is definitely shown in his compositions. When I was four, I liked his Sonatinas because they were so cheerful. I was, therefore, quite ecstatic to be given the opportunity to record five of Clementi's sonatas. These particular sonatas were selected for their different styles. Their lighthearted spirit, peaceful repose, and deep emotion are the same qualities that characterize Muzio Clementi himself.

From my own point of view, Clementi was a generous composer. He must have believed that music should be enjoyable and that there was no need to torture whoever wanted to perform it. Although his music has many interesting voices, it's not too hard to read and understand. The majority of his voices are clearly laid out and even the dynamics are well marked. Clementi really loved surprises. He has written many surprises into his music. He also loved runs – especially long runs. He has written scales and/or arpeggios that zoom up and down the keyboard. His themes are constantly changing. The dramatic emotional changes in some of his sonatas are enough to drive one crazy. What a naughty composer with an exciting mind! Clementi must have been fun to talk with.

Harold C. Schonberg mentioned in his book on pianists that performers in that period had much more leeway than pianists of today. It was not only customary but almost mandatory for a performer of the period to add his own ornaments and cadenzas. In the spirit of this early custom, I've added a short cadenza of my own

on this CD at the end of the first movement of the Op. 47, No. 2 Sonata.

I have paid close attention to some universally popular music lately. I've noticed that many famous and popular recordings sound great but obviously could be denounced by many classical musicians. Many of the pop singers have funny pitches, not-so-sweet tonal sounds, and – sometimes – very unsteady tempos! But I do love to listen to some of them. The very things that don't work well in the classical world work extraordinarily well in the non-classical world. What is it that makes these recordings famous and popular? Ha! The very things that are annoying and unacceptable in the classical world – boring repetition, loud raucous sounds, and/or "rules-less" playing – actually make people enormously appealing in the non-classical world!

I wish that the classical-music-loving public, the musicians, the musicologists, critics and our school systems would all work together to bring back classical music, the best music around, to a vigorous life. That's certainly one of my dearest wishes.

My Bach Debut Recording FAQ:

Question 1: Did I record the Bach WTC Book II from memory?
Answer I did have the whole book in my memory at the time. I even performed 20 Preludes and Fugues in the 1999 - 2000 concert season before I recorded them.

Question 2: How did I decide each piece's particular tempo?
Answer Each tempo setting is empirical. They are the result of my head-scratching and my exhaustive experimentation. The final result is what you hear on my discs.

Albert with pianist Ruth Slenczynska

ALBERT WONG

Albert Wong, born on January 1, 1990, was the first baby boy born in Boston that year. He has resided in Carrollton, Texas (a suburb of Dallas) since September 1990. Even though he could sing many entire songs before he could speak complete sentences, his musical interest was not revealed until he saw and heard the piano at age three and a half. By the time he was four he enjoyed the instrument so much that he announced to everyone that he wanted to be a concert pianist. He won the grand prize of the North Texas Piano Competition at age five.

Today, at age eleven, Albert is a seasoned performer. He gave his first solo recital at age six. Since then, he has played

Albert with violinist Itzhak Perlman

numerous solo recitals and participated in chamber and orchestral concerts across the country. He has appeared on the local TV shows, *Good Morning Texas* and *Positively Texas,* and has also been spotlighted in feature articles in *Texas Monthly* and *The Dallas Morning News.* Following the release of his debut Bach disc, *Fanfare* magazine ran a lengthy feature article in its Jan./Feb. 2001 issue entitled, 'Albert Wong: A Wise Old Soul - at Ten!' He made his orchestral debut in 1997 (at the age of seven), playing Bach's Concerto in F minor shortly after he won First Prize in the Dallas Symphonic Piano Concerto Competition. He has appeared with the Chamber Music Society of Fort Worth for three consecutive seasons. In the summer of 1999, he was asked to assist the only full-time North Texas classical radio station, WRR-FM, to promote its Smart Babies CD. In the past concert season, Albert has performed seven solo piano recitals around the country. In May of 2000 he received the Bayard H. Friedman 'Outstanding Student Award in the Performing Arts' from the Board of the Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth.

Piano is not his only love and is not the only thing in which he excels. He also studies the violin. Besides music, he enjoys reading, biking, computer games, attending concerts - and thinking! He also shows talent and interest in math, science, literature and philosophy.

An article published in *The Dallas Morning News* reports, "In private and home school lessons he has already studied Shakespeare, Mark Twain and J.R.R. Tolkien. He has read biographies of Bach, Einstein, Edison, Lincoln and Washington. At the age of three he would ask his mother to sit down and read the medical dictionary to him as some kids might ask for Dr Seuss. He's also a bit of a news hound. He reads *Newsweek, Business Week* and *Texas Monthly.* His best friends are his books, his piano, and his violin." "To me they are my daily bread," adds Albert.

Though he is home-schooled by his mother in many subjects, he is tutored by college professors in such courses as physics and chemistry. Dr. Jim Knowles, professor of physics at North Lake College, began teaching Albert in November of 1998. He uses college level algebra, calculus and trigonometry in his physics lessons. "Albert, has exceptional analytical skills," says Dr. Knowles. "When he makes an error, which is rare, he's able to listen to why it's wrong and correct it. Three weeks later he'll apply that understanding to a problem he's never seen before. That's the test that shows mastery of a subject. Repetition helps many students, but there's no way Albert needs to do 50 homework problems. He does three and he's got it."

Albert's insatiable mental appetite is what initially steered Yen-Lih, Albert's mother, toward music. Neither she nor Chi-Pong, his father, could read music. They took three-year-old Albert to a

Albert with pianist Evgeny Kissin

school to try out several instruments in the hope of him liking one of them. He made up his mind immediately; he liked the piano's sound the best. Now, eight years later, he's more fascinated with the instrument than ever. He has grown tremendously in his musical ability, especially in the last two years. It's the difference between writing nursery rhymes and Shakespearean-quality verse. Albert's desire is clear. "I don't want to be just another concert pianist, I want to be in the top one percent of great concert pianists." Albert lives to perform. "I don't get nervous before or during a performance," he says. "There is nothing to worry about - I enjoy playing the piano." His two dreams for many years have been to perform in Carnegie Hall and to tour the world giving concerts. On November 29, 2000, at the age of ten, one of those dreams became a reality quite unexpectedly. Albert made his much dreamed about debut on the great stage of New York's venerable Carnegie Hall when he was asked to perform as a guest appearance appended to Earl Wild's 85th Birthday concert. He dazzled the audience with an elegant performance of Hummel's Rondo in E flat Major, Op.11 – a favorite piece in the 19th century and one performed in our own time by luminaries like Ignaz Friedman, Jeanne-Marie Darré, and Earl Wild, but hardly heard in recent decades.

His parents do a good job of protecting Albert. They want to make sure he doesn't become overwhelmed with too many concerts and commitments too soon. "We don't push him," says Yen-Lih. "We want to keep it fun for him." However, with all of the open career possibilities, Albert is determined to become a concert pianist. He takes this goal quite seriously.

"A remarkable talent... Albert Wong's performances have the immediacy and responsiveness that reveals true talent and originality. "

Wayne Lee Gay - *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 2000

"10-year-old Albert Wong strode decisively to the piano and delivered luminous tone, fluent technique and shapely phrasing."

Scott Cantrell - *The Dallas Morning News* 2000

'Golden Youth'

Albert Wong's Bach-playing is not only technically secure - an amazing achievement for any pianist - but also musically mature. He conveys his awareness of every line in the music with just the right degree of emphasis, never exaggerating; his poise remains unruffled through the most difficult passages; his tempos are consistently sensible, neither held back for the sake of technical difficulty nor rushed due to immature enthusiasm. This would be an impressive debut for any musician; for a ten-year-old, it is astonishing, one of the best recordings of any musical prodigy ever made.

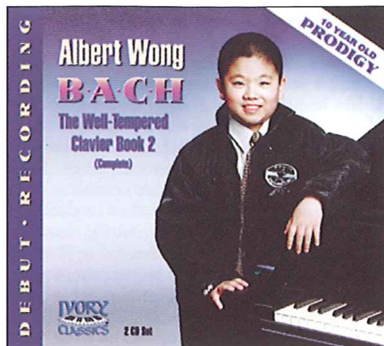
Leslie Gerber, Andante.com December 4, 2000

Albert Wong of Carrollton, Texas supplies genuinely special Bach playing, balancing rhythmic vitality with unassuming grace. Many big-name pianists could learn from this affectionate shaping and dovetailing of Bach's counterpoint and his sensitive response to harmonies.

Scott Cantrell, The Dallas Morning News November 1, 2000

I've just heard a new recording of Book 2 of the Well-Tempered Clavier, played by a remarkable 10-year old, Albert Wong on Ivory Classics.

Peter G. Davis, New York Magazine November 27, 2000



Ivory Classics CD 71007 (2-CD's)

This marks the recording debut of Albert Wong, a 10-year old prodigy. Listening to these discs I was impressed by his mastery of the piano. Lines are clearly defined; the music has forward momentum, and Master Wong seems to have the structure of each Prelude and Fugue firmly in mind.

Allen Linkowski, American Record Guide Jan./Feb. 2001

Albert Wong's Bach reflects a slightly odd personal serenity and self-confidence. He chooses modest tempos, plays evenly and with a sweet tone. His Bach flows softly, like a river. Yet he is able to sustain our interest in pieces such as the longish Prelude in E flat minor, and he keeps the lines of the, ensuing fugue clear. He articulates carefully, and accents discreetly. He has tact and a firm sense of what is important in Bach. The result is a lovely, always understated and restrained, rendition of The Well-Tempered Clavier.

Michael Ullman, Fanfare Magazine Jan./Feb. 2001

After this 85th Birthday celebration recital in Carnegie Hall, Earl Wild turned over Carnegie's stage to a talented young 10-year old prodigy named Albert Wong who first played 'Happy Birthday', then continued with a substantial piece by Hummel, done with a fine virtuoso flair.

David Moore, American Record Guide March/April 2001

A young boy walked out with flowers, Mr. Wild introduced him as Albert Wong, a 10-year-old prodigy, and asked him to play. His first offering was "Happy Birthday." He then gave an astonishing performance of the Hummel Rondo. It is as hard to believe that Albert Wong is 10 as that Earl Wild is 85.

Allan Kozinn, The New York Times December 5, 2000

CREDITS

Recorded at Fernleaf Abbey, Columbus, Ohio, May 6-9, 2001.
Original 24-Bit Master — Recorded direct to the Sadie Artemis 24-Bit High Resolution disk editor.

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