



Muzio Clementi: Six Progressive Sonatinas Op 36

Authentic Revised Edition edited by Arthur Houle
Abundant Silence
ISBN 978-1-938818-59-2

This is a unique edition in every way, permeated with warm wit and enthusiasm. Containing no fewer than 21 pages of enthusiastic footnotes, six pages of preface and an abundance of editorial suggestions, insights, scholarly research and musical wisdom, it is clearly a labour of love.

The editor Arthur Houle is primarily a performer-teacher of great experience – and tremendous humour. I have no previous experience of editions that begin with tongue-in-cheek questionnaires, but such is the case here: ‘At the risk of contravening critical edition protocol, please indulge this brief “True or false” quiz.’ Houle continues by way of explanation – not that this is really needed – to describe the edition as one ‘which uniquely blends rigorous scholarship with imagination and a soupçon of humour. For all the banter, this is the most scholarly edition of these famous sonatinas that I have encountered (and there is no shortage of alternatives).

Using the sixth rather than the fifth edition (as Maurice Hinson famously did in 1978) has led to some astonishing changes in works that I thought I knew well. Most striking are the many changes of registration, turning passages containing routine repetitions into something more striking. We also have new ornamentation, ‘music box’ pedalling and real clarity regarding tempi and misconceptions accumulated over generations.

The publication is steeped in information: practically every note is fingered, and there is a formal analysis of each section. Most amusing of all is bar 22 of the first movement in Sonata No 3 where at two points we are offered four possibilities for fingering!

All a bit manic and obsessive? Of course! Musicology and editorial footnotes in particular have tended to err on the dry side, so this all comes across as tremendously refreshing. If teachers are looking for a way to excite pupils about authenticity then they could do no better than turn to Arthur Houle’s Clementi project as a source of inspiration. I find myself more fired up over this music than ever before, even though it has been in my library for over four decades.

MURRAY MCLACHLAN

Cover page:



Other reviews:

Arthur Houle's thoughtfully-crafted collation of all six editions of Clementi's *Sonatinas Op. 36* includes an unusual amount of research-based and interesting background information. This will surely enable pianists to better understand not only the style and performance practices applicable to these important pedagogical works, but also to Clementi's many other neglected, more brilliant sonatas.

- **Sandra P. Rosenblum**, author of *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Indiana), and Emerita Chair of the Department of Performing Arts, Concord Academy, Concord, MA.

Continued on p. 2 below...

Brimming with erudition and wit, Arthur Houle's edition of Clementi's *Op. 36* is a significant contribution to any pianophile's music shelf. Houle's unparalleled research has produced what must be considered the definitive, most comprehensive and reliable version of these pedagogical staples. Piano teachers will surely embrace this publication of works at the core of every piano student's repertoire.

- **John Salmon**, Professor of Music, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Arthur Houle's new edition of the Clementi *Opus 36* Sonatinas is a valuable contribution to the pianist's library. It is clear, user-friendly, exhaustive from a historical point of view, and approached with just the right combination of seriousness and whimsy. I highly recommend it to professionals and musical amateurs alike.

- **Victor Rosenbaum**, pianist, New England Conservatory faculty,
and former Chair of the Piano Department

Dr. Houle's edition of Clementi's *Op. 36* combines meticulous research and solid pedagogy with an engaging preface that will delight students and teachers alike. This should be a new 'go-to' edition for those looking for a comprehensive score for these fantastic sonatinas.

- **Kevin Olson**, composer and piano faculty, Utah State University

This first-of-its kind Clementi edition is an essential volume for both piano students and their teachers. As a first-class educator, Mr. Houle offers a rare combination of solid scholarship and creativity, making his exploration of these fundamental studies not just useful, but stimulating.

- **Stuart Isacoff**, author of *A Natural History of the Piano* (Knopf)

Arthur Houle's new edition of Clementi's *Op. 36* takes us on an intriguing expedition into the mind of a composer. From the reader questionnaire in the forward to surprising insights in the score, Dr. Houle investigates this valuable collection of sonatinas with a microscope and reminds us that passion is in the details.

As a composer myself, I am well aware of the awesome and awful power of mistakes. On the awesome side, random mistakes can lead to revelation in the creative process. On the awful side, mistakes in a publication can destroy a piece, even driving it into obscurity. Luckily, this didn't happen with Clementi. Despite the fact that previous editions have been riddled with errors, this music has survived the test of time. These beloved compositions have become core repertoire for modern intermediate pianists, with tremendous impact on piano education. Perhaps they do deserve a closer look.

So what is different about this edition? Everything. We get a close look into the minute details that make this music great. We experience a sense of history and gain an understanding of why it matters. And somehow, Dr. Houle conveys that this isn't a tedious exercise into a maze of musical markings. Rather, he communicates the joy of discovery and becomes our guide through this worthy labyrinth. Prepare yourself for a few lightning bolts of revelation along the way.

There is a greatness in the music we study and teach every day. Dr. Houle reminds us that respecting the mind behind the music is a worthy and lively undertaking. In his own words, "A comprehensive and definitive edition is long overdue."

- **Wynn-Anne Rossi**, composer and educator (www.rossi-music.com)

[Click on picture to go to web site:](#)

