

The Clementi Piano

Played by John Newmark / Vol. 2

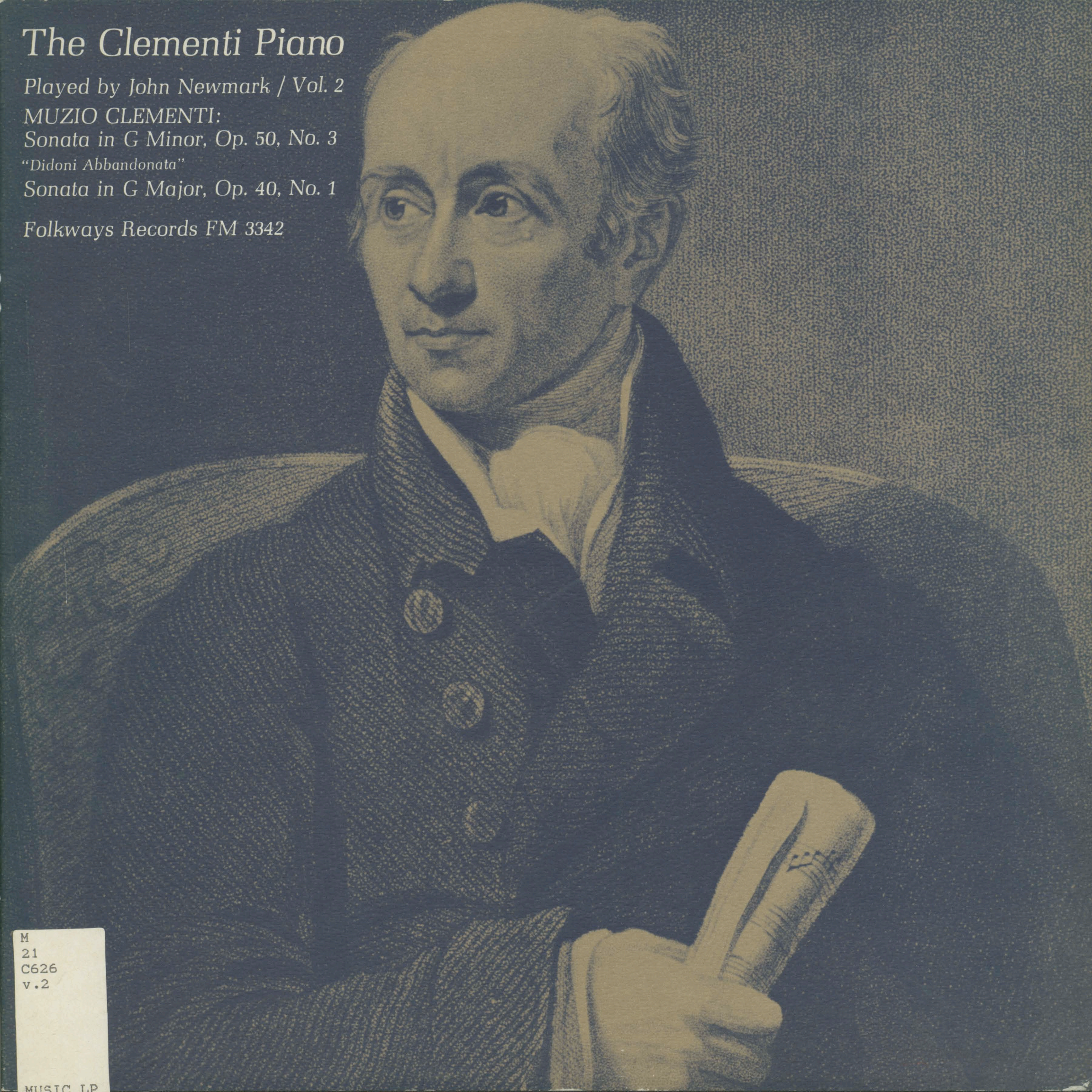
MUZIO CLEMENTI:

Sonata in G Minor, Op. 50, No. 3

"Didoni Abbandonata"

Sonata in G Major, Op. 40, No. 1

Folkways Records FM 3342



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MUSIC LP

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

JOHN NEWMARK PLAYS THE CLEMENTI PIANO

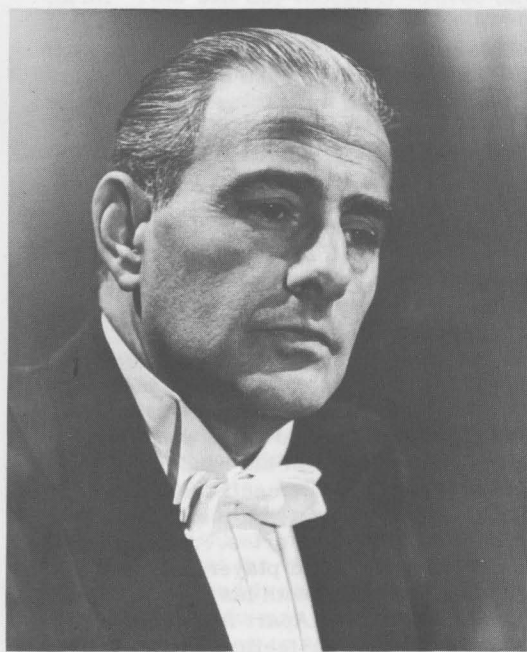
Muzio Clementi

Sonata in G major,
op. 40, no. 1

Allegro molto vivace
Adagio, molto sostenuto
e cantabile
Scherzo (Canone I,
perpetuo per moto retto
Canone II, perpetuo
per moto contrario)
Finale. Presto

Sonata in G minor, op.
50, No. 3
"Didone abbandonata"

Introduzione: Largo
patetico e sostenuto
Allegro, ma con espression-
e
Adagio dolente, attacca:
Allegro agitato, e con
disperazione



THE ARTIST

One of Canada's best-known pianists, chamber-music players and accompanists, John Newmark was born in Bremen, Germany and educated in Leipzig, coming to Canada in 1942.

Mr. Newmark settled in Montreal where he soon made his name known through broadcasts and recitals both solo and in conjunction with many of that city's finest musicians. John Newmark has also toured as accompanist with many international artists, both in Europe, North and South America and Australia. Three artists with whom his name is continually associated are Maureen Forrester, George London and the late Kathleen

Ferrier. One of the recordings which Mr. Newmark made with Miss Ferrier was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque in 1952. Many of Mr. Newmark's solo recitals have been given on the Clementi piano heard on this record. He is, however, no mere antiquarian; his interpretations of romantic music (Schumann, Schubert and Brahms) have always been prized by the discerning, and he has been responsible for many commissions received by leading Canadian composers.

Mr. Newmark has also recorded for RCA Victor, Hallmark (Canada) and London.

MUZIO CLEMENTI was born in Rome on January 23rd, 1752. He came of cultivated stock; his grandfather, so it is said, had been a musician and his father was a well-known Roman silversmith. Young Muzio evinced musical talent at an early age and was placed by his happy father to study musical rudiments with Buroni and later thorough-bass with Cordicelli. In 1764 an oratorio "The Martyrdom of the Glorious Saint Girolamo" was produced to considerable applause, while two years later a Mass of a very involved contrapuntal style had the Roman musical elite by the ears.

That same year enters upon the scene Peter Beckford, a peripatetic English milord; he was attracted by the young dark-eyed Italian's talents and was, somewhat against Clementi's better judgement, allowed to transport the young composer to England - to perfect his studies. Beckford was as good as his word; for six years of Clementi "lived quietly at the house of his protector in Wiltshire", only in 1773 descending on London, a whirlwind of pianistic and musical fireworks in his baggage and carrying all before him.

Soon Clementi was ensconced as conductor to the Italian Opera in London and much in demand in the smarter houses as pianist and accompanist. His European reputation as a pianist, however, began with his first continental tour in 1781. It was on this tour that he met Mozart, of which we shall have something to say later. The first tour definitely established Clementi as a pianistic force to be reckoned with, not merely through his technical prowess, but also through his compositions. These were, as might be expected, sonatas for his own instrument, though in the 1790's Clementi became known in England as a symphonic composer too.

In the mid-1790s Clementi began to invest his money in the London firm of instrument makers, Longman & Broderip. This company went bankrupt, but soon we find our hero, his fortune reconstituted, as a full-fledged partner in Clementi & Collard, instrument makers and publishers. Again, of this more later. Among the salesmen of his piano-warehouse was the young Irishman, John Field who became Clementi's pupil. It was with Field that Clementi went to St. Petersburg in 1802, helping establish his young protegee as composer, pianist and teacher in the Russian capital. Clementi later made side-trips to Vienna, Paris, and spent some time in Rome, burying his brother and revisiting the sights of his youth. He was on the continent until 1808.

He returned to London to find that Clementi & Collard had suffered the year before a disastrous fire to the tune of 40,000 pounds, and though his commitments required him to visit Russia yet once again, by 1810 we find him definitely settled in London, retired from the concert-stage and devoting his time to teaching and re-couping his second lost fortune.

Clementi's last European tour was in 1820. He remained a full season at Leipzig, dined, wined, feted and honoured and then returned at last to England to the seclusion of rural scenes, far from

past hurly-burly, excitements and triumphs. In the fullness of time Clementi died at his house in the green country-side near Eversham and was buried as a honoured Englishman in Westminster Abbey.

Though famed in his own day as a teacher and virtuoso, Clementi's importance for us today rests on his piano music. Besides miscellaneous short pieces, Capriccios and so on, and the pedagogical "Gradus ad Parnassum" (Steps to Parnassus), Clementi's near seventy sonatas for keyboard form the main corpus of his works. These sonatas, from the earliest in C major of 1770 to the final G minor "Didone abbandonata" (here recorded) comprise a half century of labour and their influence was enormous. Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Hummel, Field and Chopin either practiced, studied or recommended them to their friends and pupils, as did a host of lesser contemporaries. Why? The technique used was truly that of the pianoforte. Gone were the repeated chords, the artless figurations (for the most part) of the galant harpsichord writers, rather there was a new intensity of melodic outline, a new sentiment of heady emotions, of pulsating Italianate lyricism introduced into the world of pianism. Brilliant passage-work was not merely decorative for its own sake, but rather it was the final emotional result which was the novelty in Clementi's writing. Clementi himself speaks of this aspect, but to savour his declarations in full flavor, let us retrace our steps.

The year is 1781 and Clementi, fresh from Parisian triumphs, has just arrived in Vienna. The Emperor, Joseph II, had heard of his prowess as a pianist and had requested not merely that the Anglo-Italian appear before him, but also that in competition to him be heard none other than Mozart. Here is how Mozart writes about the contest to his father: "...the Emperor declared that Clementi ought to begin. 'La Santa Chiesa Cattolica' he said, Clementi being a Roman. He improvised and then played a sonata. The Emperor then turned to me: 'Allons, fire away' I improvised and played variations. The Grand Duchess produced some sonatas by Paisiello (horribly written out in his hand) of which I played the Allegros and Clementi the Andantes and Rondos. We then selected a theme from them and developed it on two pianofortes... (Clementi) is an excellent keyboard player, but that is all. He has great facility with his right hand; his star passages are in thirds. Apart from this he hasn't a nickel's worth of taste or feeling; he is a mere technician." For those who are interested, the sonata which Clementi played for the Emperor and which Mozart despised, is that in B flat, opus 47, no. 2. It is published in the second of the Schirmer two volume-collection of Clementi sonatas. But to return to our story.

Mozart's dictum on his sometime rival became well known, so well known that Ludwig Berger, the German pianist, one of Clementi's favorite pupils and himself a teacher of Mendelssohn, "asked Clementi whether in 1781 he had begun to treat the piano in his present (1806) style. Clementi answered 'No' and added that in those early days he had cultivated a more brilliant execution, especially in double-notes, hardly known then, and in extemporized cadenzas, and that subsequently he had achieved a more melodic and noble style of performance, after listening attentively to famous singers, and

also by means of the perfected mechanism of English pianos (Broadwoods, Clementi's etc.) the construction of which formerly stood in the way of a cantabile and legato style of playing."

Mozart, unfortunately, did not live to see this change of manner, and if he had, no doubt, he would have applauded Clementi's grace and power of keyboard expression, as did his contemporaries.

There is another side to Clementi's nature. That is as a publisher and as a man of business. Here we find him in Vienna in 1807, writing to his London partner, Collard, about Beethoven. The letter not merely gives an idea of Clementi's trenchant command of English, but also of his notorious avarice.

"By a little management and without committing myself, I have at last made a complete conquest of that haughty beauty, Beethoven, who first began at public places to grin and coquet with me, which of course I took care not to discourage; then slid into familiar chat, till meeting him by chance one day on the street 'Where do you lodge?' say he, 'I have not seen you this long while!', upon which I gave him my address. Two days after I found on my table his card brought by himself, from the maid's description of his lovely form. This will do, though I. Three days after that he calls again and finds me home. Conceive then the mutual ecstasy of such a meeting! I took pretty good care to improve it to our house's advantage, therefore, as soon as decency would allow, after praising very handsomely some of his compositions: 'Are you engaged to any publisher in London?' 'No' says he. 'Suppose, then, that you prefer me?' 'With all my heart' 'Done!' 'What have you ready?' 'I'll bring you a list.'

"In short I agree with him to take in MSS. Three quartets, a symphony, an overture and concerto for the violin, which is beautiful, and which, at my request, he will adapt for the pianoforte with and without additional keys; and a concerto for the pianoforte, for all which we are to pay him two hundred pounds sterling. The property, however, is only for the British Dominions... Remember that the violin concerto he will adapt himself and send it as soon as he can. The quartets etc. you may get Cramer or some other very clever fellow to adapt for the pianoforte. The symphony and the overture are so wonderfully fine that I think I have made a very good bargain. What do you think? I have likewise engaged him to compose two sonatas and a Fantasia for the pianoforte which he is to deliver to our house for the sum of sixty pounds sterling (mind, I have treated for pounds, not guineas). In short he has promised to treat with no one but me for the British Dominions. In proportion as you receive his compositions, you are to remit him the money; that is, he considers the whole as consisting of six articles... for three articles you'll remit one hundred pounds, and so on, in proportion..."

The care, then, with which Clementi undertook his business negotiations was only equalled by the care and concern which he lavished on his piano compositions.

THE MUSIC

Of the two sonatas here recorded, the G major, opus 40, no. 1 is the earlier. It was written, according to Kathleen Dale, in 1802. The famous "Didone Abbandonata" sonata in G minor, opus 50, no. 3 dates from 1821 and was Clementi's published testament of his art.

The G major work is lighthearted in essence and jolly, just skirting, at times, the frivolous. The first movement is in sonata-form as expounded by Mozart, codified by Beethoven and fossilized by Steward MacPherson. Its gaiety is well contrasted with the deeply-felt slow movement in the remote key of E major. This movement is in rondo form, with the first and second episodes being of essentially the same material, the first time in C sharp minor, the second in the tonic minor, a rather Haydnesque procedure. Of note is that, each time the main theme returns, it is varied in the most expressive and brilliant manner. Truly Clementi listened "attentively to famous singers".

In a symphony which Haydn heard in London in 1794 and which, he remarked, "fell flat", Clementi had written a minuet in Canon - 4 in 1 - at least so noted Haydn. This canonic manner we find throughout Clementi's compositions, though in this sonata the "Minuet" (Scherzo) is 2 in 1, in modo retto, while the "Trio" is in contrary motion - a tour de force whose charm belies its technical brilliance.

The Rondo-Finale is sprightly and charming, though the central "minore" leads Clementi through some harmonic adventures which even Chopin would not have disdained and which, no doubt, he used as model for similar parts of his early C minor sonata, opus 4. At the close of this "Minore" a short canon (canons again!) at the octave and at half a beats distance leads us back to the solid tonic major, and the sonata closes in a burst of heady sunlight, without, incidentally, reference to the main theme.

"Didone Abbandonata" is quite another matter. This sonata, with the other two of opus 50, was Clementi's final work and was dedicated by this Anglo-Italian to another famous expatriate Italian, Luigi Cherubini. Cherubini, the iron-fisted ruler of the Paris Conservatory, was of a rigid classical stamp and Clementi's offering, specially to an illustrious contemporary, would have to be of sterling merit to pass muster.

Cherubini's acceptance of the dedication and the clamoring impatience with which these last Sonatas of Clementi were awaited caused the composer not merely to publish them in England, but also to have them brought out simultaneously in Paris, Offenbach a/M. Leipzig and Milan.

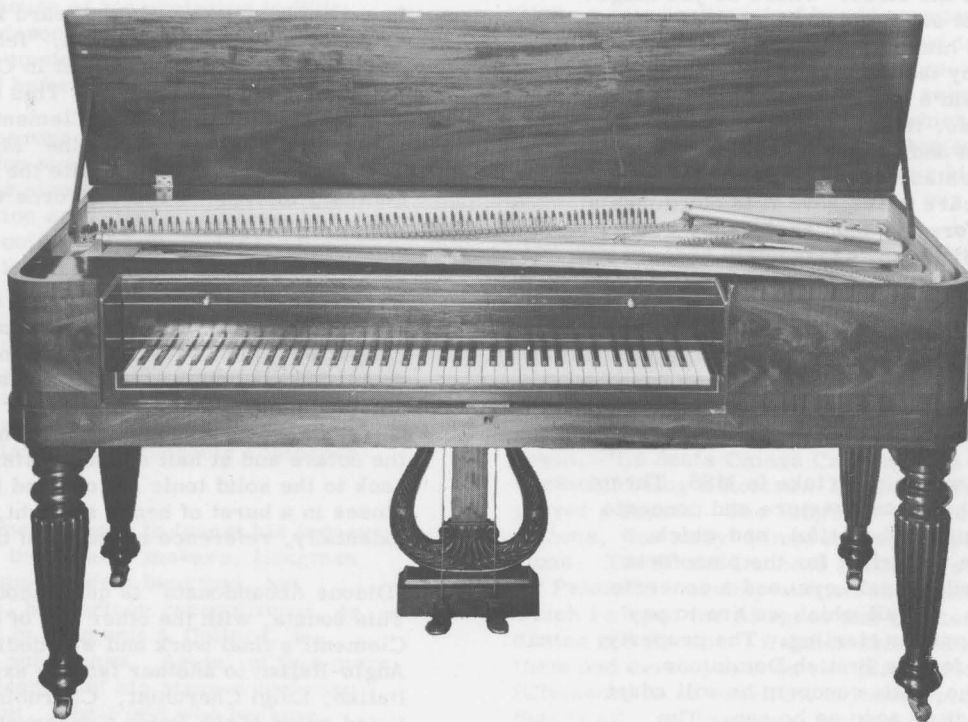
The subtitle "Didone Abbandonata" comes from the tragic story of Dido, Queen of Carthage, as found in Vergil's Aeneid. The subject matter was well known to all cultivated Europe not merely through Vergil, but through operas on the subject by Purcell, Arne, Graupner, Piccini, Cavalli, Paer and Reissiger, to name but them. Most of the Continental composers would have used Metastasio's famous opera libretto (1724) for their music, though Purcell's and Arne's librettists based themselves

on Vergil's original text.

The story is short. Aeneas, wandering through the world after the destruction of Troy, lands at Carthage. He falls in love with the Queen, Dido, and she with him. However, destiny calls him away to found the city of Rome. (Vergil was an Imperial flatterer in many ways). Dido, abandoning herself to her despair, commits suicide.

Clementi's impressive sonata follows closely the emotions of the unhappy Queen: the scene is set with a slow and sustained "Largo", in the manner of an operatic recitative. There follows an impassioned "Allegro" which Clementi marks "deliberando e meditando". In sonata form, its pathetic (in the 18th century sense) harmonic colourations mirror the shifting fury, hope and despair of the unlucky heroine.

The second movement is marked "Adagio dolente". Like the introduction, it is in the manner of an impassioned recitative, culminating in a passage of great power and harmonic audacity. The several more conventional closing bars lead without a break to the Finale. Here a daring use of accented dissonances underlines the movements' heading "Allegro agitato, e con disperazione". In this, Clementi brings all his mastery of harmonic and pianistic resources to bear on the argument. There are many sections in the Rondo, passionate, imploring, comforting - one can, in fact, even imagine in the C major episode, bluff Aeneas' attempting to assuage his lover's grief at his parting, but to no avail. Soon Dido's stormy tears break out again and the grinding dissonances (for Clementi), the sudden key changes lead us forcibly and inevitably to the unyielding bitter end.



THE INSTRUMENT

The piano heard on this recording was built by Muzio Clementi in London in 1810. Clementi himself was a celebrated composer and pianist, and was, through a piano factory which he established in London in the late 1790's, responsible for many of the finest of the early 19th century pianos.

The instrument differs from our modern piano in that it has a smaller compass (6 octaves instead of 7-1/2) smaller volume (it is strung with one string instead of three) and the covering of the hammers are leather instead of felt. Neither as rich as the sound of our modern day piano, nor as brilliant as the harpsichord, the Clementi piano nevertheless has its own particularly intimate sound, well suited to much of the late 18th century keyboard repertoire. TO PRESERVE AND RECREATE THIS QUALITY, THE VOLUME

SHOULD BE SET SOMEWHAT LOWER THAN WOULD ORDINARILY BE THE CASE FOR A PIANO RECORDING.

Mr. Newmark's instrument is the only one of its kind in Canada in playing condition. It was discovered in an antique shop in Ypsilanti, Michigan, by John Challis, the well-known maker of harpsichords and clavichords. Mr. Challis repaired the instrument and put it into playing condition; since then (1950) it has delighted public, radio and TV audiences throughout Canada.

Hugh Davidson, Montreal

Recording engineer: Eugene Prevost
P. S. R. Studio, Montreal.