Muzio

CLEMENTI

Gradus ad Parnassum • 3

Exercises Nos. 42-65

Alessandro Marangoni, Piano

Muzio
CLEMENTI
(1752-1832)

Gradus ad Parnassum, Op. 44

The Art of Playing on the Piano Forte, Exemplified in a Series of Exercises
Volume 2: Exercises Nos. 42-50 • Volume 3: Exercises Nos. 51-65

	Suite de trois pièces		**15:41**
1	**No. 42.**	**I. Allegro con energia, passione e fuoco**	**8:20**
2	**No. 43**	**II. Fuga: Moderato**	**3:54**
3	**No. 44**	**III. Allegro**	**3:37**
4	**No. 45**	**Introduzione: Andante malinconico – Fuga: Allegro moderato**	**7:29**
5	**No. 46**	**Allegro**	**0:55**
6	**No. 47**	**Molto allegro**	**1:01**
7	**No. 48**	**Velocissimo**	**3:57**
8	**No. 49**	**Vivace non troppo**	**6:43**
9	**No. 50**	**Veloce**	**1:41**
	Suite de cinq pièces		**11:41**
10	**No. 51**	**I. Introduzione: Adagio**	**2:26**
11	**No. 52**	**II. Moderato**	**1:27**
12	**No. 53**	**III. Molto allegro**	**1:03**
13	**No. 54**	**IV. Fuga a due soggetti: Tempo giusto**	**4:42**
14	**No. 55**	**V. Finale: Presto**	**2:03**
	Suite de trois pièces		**11:42**
15	**No. 56**	**I. Adagio patetico**	**3:04**
16	**No. 57**	**II. Fuga: Moderato**	**5:18**
17	**No. 58**	**III. Finale: Presto**	**3:20**
18	**No. 59**	**Allegro non troppo**	**1:15**
	Suite de quatre pièces		**13:02**
19	**No. 60**	**I. Introduzione: Allegro**	**0:49**
20	**No. 61**	**II. Allegro con espressione**	**8:21**
21	**No. 62**	**III. Introduzione: Adagio – Allegro moderato**	**2:30**
22	**No. 63**	**IV. Canone: Vivace**	**1:22**
23	**No. 64**	**Presto**	**0:54**
24	**No. 65**	**Allegro vigoroso**	**1:04**

Alessandro Marangoni, Piano

Piano: Steinway & Sons (Angelo Fabbrini collection, No. 583400)

Muzio Clementi (1752-1832)

Gradus ad Parnassum, Op. 44, Volume 3: Exercises Nos. 42-65

Composer, performer, teacher, music publisher, piano manufacturer, his professional career spanning over fifty years, the Italian-English piano virtuoso Muzio Clementi stood at the vanguard of musical development in Europe, both artistically and commercially. Born in Rome in 1752, he studied the organ, harpsichord, and counterpoint from an early age, securing a post as church organist by the age of fourteen. His precocious Italian childhood was not to last, however; in 1766, Clementi was adopted, "purchased" from his family, by Peter Beckford, a member of the British Parliament travelling through Italy who noticed Clementi's talent and decided to take the boy back to England with him. For seven years, Clementi lived at Beckford's country estate in Dorset, devoting himself to solitary study of the harpsichord and composition.

In 1774 Clementi moved to London, making his début as a harpsichordist and conducting orchestral concerts from the keyboard. Fueled by the publication of his popular *Op. 2 Sonatas* in 1779, his career as a composer and public performer, from anonymity, burst into wild acclaim. He followed his London successes with a concert tour of Europe, playing both harpsichord and the relatively new pianoforte. His technical brilliance was admired by general audiences and European royalty alike, especially by Emperor Joseph II of Austria, who arranged the legendary competition between Clementi and Mozart in 1781, a fiery musical duel between the two most famous pianists in Europe, testing improvisational skill, virtuosic prowess, and compositional mastery.

After a thwarted elopement in 1784, Clementi remained in England until 1802, composing piano sonatas and symphonies, appearing regularly as conductor, and teaching many high-paying students, some of whom, including J.B. Cramer and John Field, became celebrated concert pianists. In 1790 he stopped performing in public and invested his energy in his piano manufacturing and music publishing firms. Beginning in 1802 he embarked on five European tours, not as a public performer but as a businessman, selling his pianos and brokering deals with composers and publishers. His great coup and crowning achievement in the publishing industry was securing exclusive English printing rights with none other than the "haughty beauty", Beethoven. In 1830 he retired from his thriving company and moved to the English countryside, where he lived with his wife and children until his death at the age of eighty. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

Although revered as "the father of the pianoforte", Clementi first made his name as a virtuoso on the harpsichord. Not until the mid-1780s did he devote himself exclusively to the piano, both in performance and composition. A common misconception is that his works were written exclusively for the piano; while this is true after the 1780s, his early publications, including several sets of sonatas, were composed for, and originally first performed on harpsichord. Nevertheless, his advances in keyboard technique, including dazzling passagework, rapid octaves, and fleeting double-note runs, established the modern art of piano playing.

A revelation in Clementi's understanding of the musical range of the piano occurred during his encounter with Mozart in the Austrian royal court. Astonished by the beauty and grace of his younger rival's playing, Clementi graciously praised Mozart's skill and taste, sentiments not reciprocated. Threatened by Clementi's showmanship and sheer technical powers, Mozart brooded and complained, calling Clementi a "charlatan" behind his back and denouncing his compositions. But Clementi discovered, through Mozart, a Viennese elegance that valued musical substance and melodic grace, a new style of playing beyond mere mechanics, one that found its way into his later works.

Clementi's prolific compositional career centered on the piano sonata, his works influencing Beethoven with their treatment of complex harmony, structure, and texture. In addition to more than one hundred sonatas (64 for solo piano), he wrote twenty symphonies, numerous commercial works designed as a pedagogical tool for amateurs, and the *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Pianoforte*. Ranging from simple and didactic to boldly innovative and difficult, his piano music, though rarely heard on the concert stage, has been studied continuously by pianists of all levels.

The three-volume *Gradus ad Parnassum*, *Op. 44*, completed in 1826, represents the culmination of Clementi's career, exhibiting a veritable treasury of compositional and pianistic technique compiled from all periods of his work. From pure finger drills to preludes, fugues, canons, and sonata movements, the one hundred *exercises*, as called by Clementi, constitute a stylistically diverse array of studies covering all aspects of piano playing. Like Johann Joseph Fux's seminal treatise on counterpoint from 1725, also with the title *Gradus ad Parnassum*, Clementi's monumental work was designed to ascend to the highest level of musical and technical perfection — steps to Parnassus, as it were, the mountain sacred to Apollo, where the Muses were said to reside. Frequently grouped together by key, either in Scarlatti-like pairs or as unified suites of multiple movements, the pieces in Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum* illustrate his proclivities toward polyphonic writing, running two-voice textures, and virtuosic passagework.

This recording begins at *Exercise 42*, the first of a *Suite de trois pièces* in F minor, a lengthy *Allegro* alternating between heavy Beethovenian textures and delicate Mozartean scales. The following fugue is reminiscent of the fugal finale of Beethoven's early *Sonata in F major, Op. 10, No. 2*, but Clementi's F minor version wanders through sombre key regions. A stern *Allegro* closes the set, its right-hand octaves supported by surging left-hand semiquavers. Opening gently in C minor is *Exercise 45*, a melancholy *Introduzione* that precedes a similarly sorrowful four-voice fugue first published in Paris in 1780 but revised for inclusion in *Gradus ad Parnassum*. Dotted rhythms mark a cascade of C minor figurations in *Exercise 46*, followed by a cheerful B flat major etude for the weak fingers of the right hand. A wash of continuous semiquavers swells alarmingly in *Exercise 48*, but the rich, calm ending in G major sets the opening pitches and the tone of the next piece, an extended exploration of sonata form. A straight-forward finger exercise follows, drawing *Volume 2* to a sweetly buoyant close.

Volume 3 opens majestically in the French Overture style, with chordal dotted rhythms ushering in *Exercises 51-55*, a *Suite de cinq pièces* in D minor. These five contrasting movements in Baroque and Classical styles explore varying formal techniques and expressive content: dramatic pathos, melodic counterpoint, fiery arpeggios, restrained fugal writing, and dark humour. An operatic lament opens the following *Suite de trois pièces*, its declamatory flourishes heightened by dotted rhythms. From this tragic chromaticism unfolds a measured, faintly melancholy fugue. Serpentine quavers are soon interrupted by punchy rising chords as the Finale swerves through chromatic tonal regions and ends, as befits a Classical finale, with punctuated repetitions of the dominant and tonic.

A brief cantabile ripples gently over G flat major arpeggios but is bookended by another set, *Exercises 60-63*, a *Suite de quatre pièces* in E flat. The short, serious *Introduzione* precedes an expansive excursion into sonata form, unfolding through chromatic shadings, questioning pauses, and delicate strings of falling pitches. Another *Introduzione* follows with impassioned flourishes that lead into a jovial study of parallel chromatic scales. A tossed-off two-part canon of quick slurs brings the set to a lighthearted finish. The recording closes with two short flashes of pianistic virtuosity, swirling scale patterns followed by rapid octaves sparkling victoriously across the keyboard.

Anyssa Neumann

Alessandro Marangoni

Born in Italy in 1979, Alessandro Marangoni studied piano with Marco Vincenzi at the Università di Pavia, where he was awarded the diploma with honours (summa cum laude). He continued his studies at the Scuola di Musica in Fiesole with Maria Tipo and Pietro De Maria. Besides his musical studies he was awarded an honours degree in philosophy at the Università di Pavia with a thesis on Fernando Liuzzi's philosophy of music. He was also a *merit student* of the Almo Collegio Borromeo, Pavia, one of the oldest and most important European university colleges. The recipient of several national and international awards, including the prestigious Amici di Milano International Prize for Music, Alessandro Marangoni has appeared in many important musical events in Europe, both as a soloist and as a chamber musician, including Rome (Accademia di Santa Cecilia), Florence (Accademia della Crusca), Venice (Teatro La Fenice), Ischia (the Walton Foundation), Cittadella in Assisi, Teatro Verdi in Trieste, Engadiner Internationale Kammermusik-Festspiele, Sagra Musicale Umbra, the Italian Cultural Institute in London, the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan, St John's College, Cambridge, and the Universidad Católica de Chile. As a chamber musician he has collaborated with some of the most important Italian musical personalities and ensembles, including Mario Ancillotti, Vittorio Ceccanti, Daria Masiero, Stefano Parrino, Quirino Principe, Carlo Zardo and the Nuovo Quartetto Italiano. He has played to great public and critical acclaim in Spain with the Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra and in Bratislava with the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Aldo Ceccato. He has also given more than a hundred concerts for the Second Life virtual platform. He has recently started an artistic collaboration with the Italian actress Valentina Cortese. He plays the piano for the Trio Albatros, with which he has won acclaim all over the world. In 2007 Alessandro Marangoni made a recording for La Bottega Discantica of piano works by the great Italian conductor Victor de Sabata. For the 40th anniversary of the latter's death he played in a recital at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, with Daniel Barenboim. In addition to Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum* he is recording the complete piano works by Rossini (*Péchés de vieillesse*). His recently released recording of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Piano Concertos* (8.572823) has been widely acclaimed. Alessandro Marangoni teaches piano and chamber music in several masterclasses in Europe and South America.

www.alessandromarangoni.com

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Muzio Clementi was revered as 'the father of the pianoforte'. He was a virtuoso, composer and teacher whose publishing and piano manufacturing made him hugely wealthy. *Gradus ad Parnassum*, in three volumes and completed by 1826, consists of 100 incredibly demanding exercises designed to lead to musical and technical perfection. It remains one of the great compendiums in musical history. Prize-winning pianist Alessandro Marangoni continues his critically acclaimed survey in this third of four volumes.

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Alessandro Marangoni, Piano

Piano: Steinway & Sons (No. 583400)

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