Practice Guide
Sonatina in C Major, Op. 36, No. 3, I. *Spiritoso*
Muzio Clementi

This movement features legato passages, highlighting the new qualities of the fortepiano that separated it from earlier keyboard instruments. These sonatinas, practiced by such greats as Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Chopin, continue to be used to teach technique to this day.

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Articulation and Phrasing

• Using the techniques Michael discusses in the Module 2 Instructional Video, discover the best fingering decisions for the Sonatina and write them in the score. Do this by playing each hand separately. Try different fingering possibilities until you find the most economical option. Notice opportunities that allow you to keep the fingering consistent: when the hand can stay in one position, when notes are repeated, or when repeated gestures enable sequential fingering.

• Once you find satisfactory fingerings, play each hand individually, while focusing on the musical phrasing. Try different phrasing and articulations, and mark the ideal option in the score.

• Like many classical composers, Clementi composed this work in 4-bar phrases. Try phrasing these four bars together, making sure that there is an uninterrupted melodic line. Musically, which phrases seem to pose a question (known as an antecedent phrase) and which seem to pose an answer (known as a consequent phrase) or resolution?

• Looking at both hands, think about how the two voices relate to one another. Play through every 4-bar phrase slowly, playing hands together, taking care to maintain your fingerings. Decide on a final articulation and phrasing for yourself after hearing both hands together.

• After listening to Brian Zeger’s instruction in Module 2 on how the Italian language impacted composers of the Classical era, look back on your phrasing and articulation markings for each hand. Make observations based on your new knowledge!

Dynamic Contrast

• Look at each 4-bar phrase again, now from the perspective of dynamic contrast. Does each phrase go up or down? Apply the principle Michael discusses, (going up = get louder, going down = get softer). Are there any exceptions? Also identify the significant places of tension and resolution that Brian Zeger discusses in the Expert Insights video.

• Think about extreme changes in dynamic, such as going from forte to piano. Do you want these changes to happen suddenly, or might you prepare them with a crescendo or decrescendo? Mark these in the score.

• Identify any points at which the left hand takes on a more important role than the right hand? At these moments, the left hand may need to be louder than the right hand. Mark these moments in your score. Use ghosting to achieve the desired balance between the hands.

• Are there any fingerings that now feel uncomfortable when applying the dynamics? Make sure your hands are always comfortable and that your fingering allows you to have a flexible wrist and relaxed arm.

• Is there a climax in the piece that can be brought out with dynamic contrast, as demonstrated in the Tom Cabaniss Expert Insights video in Module 3? As you practice, keep Michael’s demonstration from the video in mind. Work on creating dynamic contrast by differing your speed of attack on the key.
Rhythm, Tempo, and Passagework

- Practice the piece with the metronome providing a click on every quarter note beat. Play the piece at a slow, medium, and fast tempo. Now practice the piece with the metronome providing a click on every half note beat of the measure.
- Apply rhythmic drills to the piece by changing the written rhythms of each measure. Start by using the short-long and the long-short pattern you learned from the course.
- After learning from Rachel Straus in the Module 4 Experts Insights video about how dancers must achieve different rhythms in different parts of their bodies simultaneously, look for instances where you are playing different subdivisions in each hand. Analyze how independent or dependent your hands feel at any given point in your performance.

Pedaling

- The left hand is often the accompaniment for a highly articulated and lyrical right hand in this piece. Find a way to use the pedal that allows for resonance in the left hand while maintaining the clarity of the right hand.
- Sing the melody to yourself, paying close attention to which notes you emphasize and to which notes you provide a lighter texture. Use the pedal to help you convey the difference between those textures and gestures. Keep in mind that pedaling can change articulation, dynamics, and color!
- After listening to Nico Namoradze’s discussion about the history of the instrument in the Module 5 Expert Insights video, has your perspective on your pedaling decisions changed? Go back and edit your pedal markings as needed to achieve a sound closer to what Clementi had in mind when he wrote the piece.