

Dr. Lawrence Smith, '58 donates Clementi Piano

A beautiful Clementi piano of special and historical significance was given in the summer of 2007 by Dr. R. Lawrence Smith, M.D. (class of 1958) and his wife, Mrs. Ganelle Smith to the Department of Music. The piano will be used as a new teaching tool for our students of period music.

Information about the Clementi Piano

- Clementi and Company Fortepiano (1813-1814)
- Inscription by Joseph Hoy, January 1814, London (Serial Number 483)
- Description: 7 feet and 8 ¼ inches in length; triple strung 6 octave compass; una corda-due corde lever; split damper pedal; and English grand action
- Restoration History: 1909 by Arnold Dolmetsch of Chickering Company; 1995-96 by Ken Eschete of New Orleans, LA; presently maintained by Louis Dolive of Staunton, VA

The fortepiano was built in 1813-1814 at the Clementi factory in London. Provenance is unknown until 1909, when Arnold Dolmetsch, working for the Chickering Company, stabilized the case, replaced the tuning pins and dampers, and substituted felt hammers for the original leathers. Prior to 1925, it was part of the musical instrument collection of a Mrs. Adrian Hoffman Joline in New York City. She gave her collection to Barnard College (the women's part of Columbia University) in 1925, where it remained until acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1990. Dr. Smith purchased the instrument in 1995.

Ken Eschete of New Orleans has restored the instrument to the equivalency of the sound and touch it would have had when built, while leaving intact Dolmetsch's structural changes. Strings were replaced and leather hammers re-installed. John Watson, Conservator of Musical Instruments for Colonial Williamsburg, was consultant in this work. Following the 1996 restoration, a concert was presented by Prof. Robin Holtz Williams at Tulane University on September 24, 1996. In the program notes conservator Eschete commented on the craftsmanship of Joseph Hoy, "...it is hard to ignore the message Joseph Hoy is sending us through his workmanship. As conservators, one of our principle jobs is to gain knowledge about the technology of a period by studying the way objects were made. In this restoration, we were constantly challenged to match the workmanship of the original workers."

Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) was born in Italy but, like other famous musicians, adopted England as his home. He was already highly regarded as a keyboardist, composer, teacher, and music publisher when in 1798 he bought a 45% interest in a failing piano manufactory in London, Longman & Broderip. The company went through several name changes, eventually becoming simply "Clementi & Co." Clementi utilized his skill and reputation to market his instruments, especially to the aristocracy in Austria, Germany, and Russia, but probably had little to do with design or manufacturing. Following his death, the company's name changed to that of the surviving partners, Collard and Collard, continuing as such until the factory and records burned in the 1930's. Clementi's pianos were considered of equivalent quality to Broadwood's, and, prior to the establishment of a native piano industry in the 1830's and 1840's, were some of the most popular imported instruments in this country.