

NAXOS

Antonio
SOLER

Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 28–41

Denis Zhdanov, Piano



Antonio Soler (1729–1783) Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 28–41

Born in 1729 at Olot, Girona, Antonio Soler, like many other Catalan musicians of his and later generations, had his early musical training as a chorister at the great Benedictine monastery of Montserrat, where his teachers included the *maestro di capilla* Benito Esteve and the organist Benito Valls. Soler studied the work of earlier Spanish and Catalan composers, and of Joan Cabanilles and his pupil Josep Elías, combining his abilities as an organist, with those of a composer. He took an appointment as organist at the Santa Iglesia de Lérida and was also employed at the Cathedral of La Seu d'Urgell. It was there that in 1752 he met the Bishop of Urgell, former Prior of the monastery of the Escorial, Sebastián de Victoria, who was seeking someone to serve as an organist at the Escorial. Soler took this opportunity, and was ordained subdeacon by the Bishop, entering the Hieronymite Order of San Lorenzo de El Escorial and taking his vows the following year. In 1757, on the death of the previous incumbent, Soler became *maestro di capilla* and organist at the Escorial, positions he held for the rest of his life.

Soler also benefited from contact with musicians from the court. The Escorial had been built by Philip II as a royal palace and a monastery, and the court generally spent the autumn there. This brought the initial possibility for Soler of further study of the organ with the court organist, and for contact with Domenico Scarlatti, a strong influence on Soler's style of writing in his addition to keyboard repertoire in some 150 surviving sonatas. Soler, in the course of his duties, wrote music for the church, but also contributed to secular repertoire for the entertainment of the court. Music received particular encouragement under Ferdinand VI, and rather less under his successor Carlos III. Soler, however, was charged with the teaching of the young princes Antonio and Gabriel, the sons of Carlos III, and received particular support from the younger of the two, Don Gabriel, whose *Casita del Infante*, built in the early 1770s, was in part designed for musical performances

in which Don Gabriel participated. As a theorist Soler published in 1762 a study of modulation, *Llave de la Modulación*, a treatise explaining the art of rapid modulation (*modulación agitada*), which brought correspondence with Padre Martini in Bologna, the leading Italian composer and theorist, who vainly sought a portrait of Soler to add to his gallery of leading composers. Soler was also an acknowledged expert on the construction of organs, advising on instruments for the cathedrals of Málaga and Seville, while his wider interests are exemplified in his *Combinación de monedas y cálculo manifiesto contra el libro anonimo intitulado "Correspondencia de la Moneda de Cataluña a la de Castilla"*, a polemical study of the comparative currencies of Castille and Catalonia, dedicated to Carlos III.

The many keyboard sonatas of Soler remain his best known achievement as a composer. Many of these were written for Don Gabriel and suggest, at least, the influence of Domenico Scarlatti, while continuing to reflect something of the changing styles of music exemplified in Vienna. The modern publication of the sonatas owes much to Father Samuel Rubio, who collected many of the sonatas in seven volumes, published between 1957 and 1962, and whose R numbering is in wide use, including sonatas subsequently added to his first listing.

Sonatas Nos. 28 and 29 in C major show contrasting styles. The first offers a melody above a broken octave accompaniment, its two halves repeated, as is the usual practice in these binary form works. The second sonata, with its echoes of Scarlatti, starts with an ascending figure, with repeated notes, and continues, impelled forward by its own energy.

As with Scarlatti, a number of the sonatas seem to have been written as pairs. The *Sonatas Nos. 30 and 31 in G major* are an apparent example of this. The first of the pair is unusual in that it offers a first section in 2/4 followed by a livelier second section in D minor. The return of the first

section leads to the return of the second, now in G minor, capped by a final short section in G major. The second sonata provides a rapid contrast.

Sonatas Nos. 32 and 33 in G minor/major again seem to constitute a matching pair. The first of the two, in G minor, starts with a passage in which the left hand enters in canonic imitation of the right. Its second half introduces something of drama in its shifts of key. The second sonata, in G major, introduces more modern techniques in its use of an Alberti bass and of sequences, as phrases are repeated, each repetition ascending in pitch.

Sonata No. 34 in E major again makes considerable use of sequence, as figures are repeated, with a change of pitch. Each half of the sonata ends with arpeggios and final leaps in the right hand of two octaves, repeated, with a final leap down of three octaves.

Sonata No. 35 in G major makes the usual use of passages in thirds and in the closing section of each half introduces an element of syncopation. There are wide leaps, and short passages where some hand-crossing is called for.

Sonata No. 36 in C minor is a gently contrasting piece, with its use of step-wise melodies and syncopation. It is followed here by *Sonata No. 37 in D major*, in similar mood, its right-hand melody in triplet figuration. *Sonata*

No. 38 in C major starts with the imitative entry of the left hand and continues in a recognisably Scarlattian style, making use of phrases repeated in an echo effect. As so often there is a tendency to use contrary motion between upper and lower parts.

Sonata No. 39 in D minor makes considerable use of thirds in the upper part, with scales and broken chords, in a mood that, in its minor key, has elements of the sombre.

Sonata No. 40 in G major seems to suggest a new world. The sonata starts dramatically and proceeds with unexpected modulations. In his note on the same sonata the harpsichordist Gilbert Rowland draws attention to the sonata's orchestral textures and suggestions of an operatic overture (Gilbert Rowland: *Sonatas for Harpsichord, Vol. 8*, Naxos 8.555031). The modulation to B flat major, the key in which the first half of the piece ends, is, to say the least, unusual.

Sonata No. 41 in E flat major also belongs to the world of the *stile galant*. Its principal theme is based on the ascending scale and what follows has the grace and delicacy of the period, well suited to the developing keyboard instruments of the new age.

Keith Anderson

Maria Canals International Music Competition

The Maria Canals International Music Competition of Barcelona (www.mariacanal.cat) is the most senior music competition in Spain and one of the leading events in the world following its recognition by the World Federation of International Music Competitions in 1958. It was founded in 1954 by the leading pianist and pedagogue Maria Canals, and her husband Rossend Llates. With Her Majesty Queen Sofia as President of Honour, since 1954 the competition association has organised 110 competitions in the branches of piano, singing, violin, cello, guitar, flute, percussion and chamber music. During

these years more than 7,000 entrants have taken part from a hundred countries from the five continents, and there have been more than 180 jurors from around the world. The competition holds its auditions in the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, and offers the prize-winners important financial rewards, a tour of recitals and concerts with orchestra around the world and a recording for the Naxos label. Its winners have developed important professional careers in both performance and teaching in leading centres throughout the world.

Concurso Internacional de Música Maria Canals

El Concurso Internacional de Música Maria Canals de Barcelona (www.mariacanal.cat) es el decano de los concursos de música en España y uno de los primeros del mundo en ser aceptados por la Federación Mundial de Concursos Internacionales de Música en 1958. Fue fundado en 1954 por la prestigiosa pianista y pedagoga Maria Canals y su marido Rossend Llates. Con S.M. la Reina Sofia como Presidenta de Honor, desde 1954 la asociación del concurso ha organizado 110 concursos de las ramas de piano, canto, violín, violonchelo, guitarra, flauta, percusión y música de cámara. Durante estos años

han participado en el mismo más de 7.000 concursantes de un centenar de países de los 5 continentes, y más de 180 jurados procedentes de todo el mundo. El Concurso celebra sus pruebas en el Palau de la Música Catalana de Barcelona, y ofrece a los premiados importantes premios económicos, una gira de recitales y conciertos con orquesta por todo el mundo y una grabación para el sello discográfico Naxos. Sus ganadores han desarrollado importantes carreras profesionales tanto en el ámbito de la interpretación como de la docencia en los centros más importantes de todo el mundo.



Denis Zhdanov

Denis Zhdanov's artistic activity includes performances in such well-known concert halls as the Warsaw Philharmonic, Palau de la Musica de Barcelona, Auditori de Tenerife, KulturGasteig Munich, Salle Cortot Paris and L'Auditori Barcelona, among others. He has appeared with orchestras including the Vallès Symphony (Spain), Orquesta Sinfónica de Tenerife (OST), Granada Symphony Orchestra (OCG), Pomeranian Philharmonic Orchestra (Poland), Polish Camerata, "Nova Amadeus" Chamber Orchestra (Italy), Georgian National Symphony Orchestra, and the "Simfonia Iuventus" Orchestra (Poland). He is the winner of numerous prestigious piano competitions, including the 56th International Maria Canals Piano Competition in Barcelona in 2010, the 2nd International Piano Competition "Czerny-Stefańska in Memoriam" in Poznań, Poland, the International Youth Piano Competition "Arthur Rubinstein in Memoriam" in Bydgoszcz, Poland and the International Piano Competition "Roma 2009: Chopin Prize". He was also second prize winner of the 3rd Maj Lind Piano Competition, Finland. In 2010 he made a commercial recording of works by Chopin for the Arthur Rubinstein International Foundation.

Photo: Elina Akselrud

Antonio Soler's eminent position at the eighteenth-century Spanish court led to a series of important works, both sacred and secular. Of them, the best known are his keyboard sonatas, many of which were written for the young prince, Don Gabriel, son of Carlos III. The sonatas manage to absorb the influence of Domenico Scarlatti but also exude the prevailing modernist trends of Vienna. Some are designed in pairs, and many employ subtle echo effects, syncopation and exciting, athletic leaps that show his delight in repetition and contrast. This is Volume 3 of the complete Soler Keyboard Sonatas.

Audenis



Antonio
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(1729–1783)



Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 28–41

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|----------------------------|------|----------------------------------|------|
| 1 Sonata No. 28 in C major | 5:39 | 9 Sonata No. 36 in C minor | 6:15 |
| 2 Sonata No. 29 in C major | 2:18 | 10 Sonata No. 37 in D major | 4:08 |
| 3 Sonata No. 30 in G major | 4:09 | 11 Sonata No. 38 in C major | 3:34 |
| 4 Sonata No. 31 in G major | 1:58 | 12 Sonata No. 39 in D minor | 3:55 |
| 5 Sonata No. 32 in G minor | 4:00 | 13 Sonata No. 40 in G major | 5:02 |
| 6 Sonata No. 33 in G major | 5:40 | 14 Sonata No. 41 in E flat major | 5:25 |
| 7 Sonata No. 34 in E major | 4:38 | | |
| 8 Sonata No. 35 in G major | 2:39 | | |



Denis Zhdanov, Piano
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