



Antonio
SOLER

Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 75–86

Soo-Jung Ann, Piano



Antonio Soler (1729–1783) Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 75–86

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, 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. 75 and 76 in F major, form a contrasting pair. The first of the two is based on an ascending motif, treated imitatively. The sonata is marked *Andante*. *Sonata No. 76* is an *Allegro*, a work demanding some virtuosity from the performer and making further use of chordal accompaniments in the left hand in its second half, offering a piece very much in the style of Scarlatti.

Sonatas Nos. 77 and 78 in F sharp minor again form a pair. The first, marked *Andante largo*, has an air of intense melancholy, while the second, with the indication *Allegro non tanto*, is in 6/8 and presents wide leaps, octave passages and series of thirds, all calling for technical command.

Sonata No. 79, in the relatively remote key of F sharp major, is in two movements. The first is a *Cantabile*, making full use of modulation, dotted rhythms and

ornamentation. The *Allegro* second movement is in marked contrast, with its rapid scale passages and left-hand octave accompaniments.

Sonata No. 80 in the Dorian mode can be paired with *Sonata No. 81*, in the same mode. The first of these, marked *Allegretto*, in 3/8 with wide leaps and characteristically dotted rhythms, leads to a sonata marked *Prestissimo*, bringing brief moments of *Cantabile* respite. *Sonata No. 82 in G major*, with the direction *Allegro assai* provides a natural conclusion to the preceding two sonatas, the Dorian mode based on G now followed by a piece in G major, in 6/8 and suggesting again the style of Scarlatti.

Sonata No. 83 in F major, a lively *Allegro*, in Soler's customary binary form, is principally in two voices. It is

Maria Canals International Music Competition

The Maria Canals International Music Competition of Barcelona (www.mariacanal.cat) is the principal 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 Rosend Llates. With Her Majesty Queen Sofía as President of Honour, since 1954 the competition association has organised over 120 competitions in the branches of piano, singing, violin, cello, guitar, flute, percussion and

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 Rosend Llates. Con S.M. la Reina Sofía como Presidenta de Honor, desde 1954 la asociación del concurso ha organizado más de 120 concursos de las ramas de piano, canto, violín, violonchelo, guitarra, flauta, percusión y música de

chamber music. During these years more than 8,000 entrants have taken part from a hundred countries from the five continents, and there have been more than 200 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.

Sonata No. 84 in D major, another *Allegro*, with chordal accompaniments at its modulating centre, introducing the second half of the work, and repeated notes and leaps, all very much in the manner of Scarlatti. *Sonata No. 85 in F sharp minor*, with its echoing phrases, starts with contrapuntal imitation, as the left hand enters with the descending motif heard first in the right hand. As so often, Soler makes full use of the range of the keyboard available to him.

Sonata No. 86 in D major, marked *Allegretto*, is in triple time and characteristically Spanish in style, exploring the tonic minor key and ascending and descending scale patterns.

Keith Anderson

Soo-Jung Ann

Soo-Jung Ann has had great success at international piano competitions, receiving first prize at the International Telekom Beethoven Competition in Bonn in 2013, the Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli Prize of the Piano Academy in Eppan in 2013, first prize at the Maria Canals International Music Competition, Barcelona in 2012, fourth prize at the Hong Kong International Piano Competition in 2011, third prize at the AXA Dublin International Piano Competition in 2009 and sixth prize at the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition in 2009. She has performed widely and appeared as a concerto soloist with the Kraków Philharmonic Orchestra, the Gunpo Prime Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rzeszow Philharmonic Orchestra, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, the Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vallès Symphony Orchestra, the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, the Korean Symphony Orchestra, the Granada Symphony Orchestra, the Tenerife Symphony Orchestra and the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra.



Photo: Dan Hammen

For the last 25 years of his life Antonio Soler occupied the distinguished positions of *maestro di capilla* and organist at the Escorial palace. He wrote around 150 keyboard sonatas, which remain his best-known achievement, a body of music that reveals the subtle influence of Domenico Scarlatti on the Catalan composer, as well as prevailing Viennese trends. Volume eight of the complete sonatas shows Soler's cultivation of expressive melancholy in *No. 77 in F sharp minor*, a virtuosic use of the full range of the keyboard in *No. 85 in F sharp minor* and characteristically vibrant Spanish motifs in *No. 86 in D major*.

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SOLER**
(1729–1783)

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Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 75–86

1 Sonata No. 75 in F major Andante	8:45	8 Sonata No. 81 in G minor (Dorian) Prestissimo	2:58
2 Sonata No. 76 in F major Allegro	5:34	9 Sonata No. 82 in G major Allegro assai	5:30
3 Sonata No. 77 in F sharp minor Andante largo	9:34	10 Sonata No. 83 in F major Allegro	3:34
4 Sonata No. 78 in F sharp minor Allegro non tanto	5:20	11 Sonata No. 84 in D major Allegro	3:33
5 Sonata No. 79 in F sharp major Cantabile	12:50	12 Sonata No. 85 in F sharp minor Allegretto	6:28
6 Sonata No. 80 in G minor (Dorian) Allegretto	8:16 4:34	13 Sonata No. 86 in D major Allegretto	6:52

Soo-Jung Ann, Piano

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