

Antonio
SOLER

Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 96–98

Daumants Liepinšs, Piano



Antonio Soler (1729–1783) Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 96–98

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 works 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 of 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 teaching 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. Of these, many 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.

While most of Soler's sonatas are undated, the six sonatas included in *Opus 4* bear the date 1779. These sonatas follow classical procedure and are in several movements, some of which had prior existence as single-movement works.

Sonata No. 96, in E flat major, starts with a Classical *Andante gracioso*, its repeated exposition duly modulating to B flat major, leading to a short development and recapitulation. The second movement, an *Allegro cantabile*, introduces its ascending scalar principal theme with an opening chord and proceeds to an exposition that makes use of an Alberti Bass and ends with concluding octaves in the left hand. The third movement, a minuet and trio, is followed by a lively final movement, marked *Allegro non molto*, a pastoral 6/8, with leaping octaves, in tripartite Classical form.

Sonata No. 97, in A major, is the first of a set of three four-movement sonatas. It starts with a movement of some delicacy, making use of crossed hands and in Classical form. The second movement, a minuet and an A minor trio, leads to an *Andantino con moto* and a more elaborate final *Allegro*, replete with octaves, arpeggios and considerable use of an Alberti Bass, accompanying divided triads.

Sonata No. 98, in B flat major, opens with an *Allegretto*, in Classical form, making some use of fuller textures as it progresses. The manuscript lacks movement titles, but the second movement is a minuet and trio, the latter in B flat minor. The third movement is a *Rondo*, allowing increased elaboration in its intervening episodes. The last movement, in 3/8, as elsewhere, finds a place for hand-crossing in its rapid and characteristic figuration.

Keith Anderson

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 Rossend 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

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.

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 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 cámara. Durante estos años han participado en el mismo

más de 8.000 concursantes de un centenar de países de los 5 continentes, y más de 200 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.

Daumants Liepiņš

Young Latvian pianist Daumants Liepiņš recently topped *Pianist Magazine*'s list of 'Four pianists to look out for in 2020'. He firmly established his reputation as an artist in Latvia when he was awarded the Young Artist of the Year prize at the 2017 Lielā mūzikas balva (Latvian National Grand Music Award), and has since appeared with all the leading symphony orchestras in Latvia, as well as the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, Flanders Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra of Romania among others. Liepiņš has been awarded prizes at numerous competitions, including the Maria Canals International Piano Music Competition, Nordic International Piano Competition, George Enescu International Competition, RNCM James Mottram International Piano Competition, Tbilisi International Piano Competition (Special Prize for Artistry) and the Vendome Prize at Verbier Festival. In 2022 he is artist in residence at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Belgium and Ingesund Piano Center in Sweden. www.daumantsliepins.com



Photo © Kristaps Kains

Like many Catalan musicians of his time, Antonio Soler received initial training as a chorister before his excellence as an organist ensured high appointment at the Escorial, Spain's royal palace. Here he absorbed the influence of Domenico Scarlatti, and the keyboard sonatas Soler composed remain his most lasting contribution to musical history. The three sonatas in this volume reflect his awareness of trends in Viennese music and are notable for their vivid pastoral elements, refined delicacy and sizzling virtuosic demands.

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**Antonio
SOLER**
(1729–1783)



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Sonata No. 96 in E flat major, Op. 4, No. 6 (1779) 26:19

- 1 I. Andante gracioso 6:29**
- 2 II. Allegro cantabile 5:54**
- 3 III. Minuetto I: Suo tempo – Minuetto II: Allegro 6:22**
- 4 IV. Pastoral: Allegro non molto 7:30**

Sonata No. 97 in A major, Op. 8, No. 1 (1783) 21:22

- 5 I. Allegretto 5:59**
- 6 II. Minuetto I–II 3:37**
- 7 III. Rondo: Andantino con moto 5:14**
- 8 IV. Allegro 6:26**

Sonata No. 98 in B flat major, Op. 8, No. 2 (1783) 23:33

- 9 I. [Allegretto] 8:13**
- 10 II. [Minuetto I–II] 3:59**
- 11 III. [Rondo: Andantino] 6:15**
- 12 IV. [Allegro] 4:56**

Daumants Liepiņš, Piano

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