

Antonio
SOLER

Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 87–92

Levon Avagyan, Piano



Antonio Soler (1729–1783) Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 87–92

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 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 a study of modulation in 1762,

Llave de la Modulaci3n, a treatise explaining the art of rapid modulation ('*modulaci3n 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 M3laga and Seville, while his wider interests are exemplified in his *Combinaci3n de monedas y c3lculo manifiesto contra el libro anonimo intitulado 'Correspondencia de la Moneda de Catalu3a 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.

Sonata No. 87 in G minor explores other keys in its repeated second half, the whole sonata offering a delicate minuet-type rhythm.

Sonata No. 88 in D flat major, in triple time, makes use of quaver triplets in dashing style, exploiting the full range of the keyboard. Its use of rapidly repeated notes suggests the influence of Scarlatti.

Sonata No. 89 in F major, like its immediate predecessors, makes use of left hand octaves, with chains of thirds in the right hand. It is followed, in Father Rubio's numbering, by *Sonata No. 90*, in the less usual key of F sharp major. The sonata calls for some hand-crossing and presents contrasting material, the panache of the opening leading to a more delicate section, both elements to return in the repeated second half of the work.

While most of Soler's sonatas are undated, the six

sonatas included in *Op. 4* bear the date 1779. These sonatas follow classical procedure and are in several movements, although some of the movements had prior existence as single-movement works. *Sonata No. 91 in C major* starts with a movement that has no tempo marking, leading to a second movement, marked *Allegro di molto*, in which the bass makes considerable use of divided octaves. There is contrast in a short *Andante maestoso*, a minuet, framing a second minuet, marked *Allegro*, and making great use of octaves. The sonata ends with a final gigue-like *Allegro pastoril*.

Sonata No. 92 in D major, numbered *Op. 4, No. 2*, is again in four movements and in a style that reflects its date, 1779, and contemporary styles and forms of composition, as well as newer developments in keyboard instruments. The *Presto* suggests similar influences – the world of Haydn, Soler's near contemporary. The third movement brings two minuets, the first *Andante largo* and the second, which it frames, a sparer *Allegro*. The work ends with an *Allegro pastoril* in 6/8.

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 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

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 Rosend Llates. Con S.M. la Reina Sofía como Presidenta de Honor, desde 1954 la asociaci3n del concurso ha organizado más de 120 concursos de las ramas de piano, canto, violín, violonchelo, guitarra, flauta, percusi3n 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 grabaci3n para el sello discogr3fico Naxos. Sus ganadores han desarrollado importantes carreras profesionales tanto en el ámbito de la interpretaci3n como de la docencia en los centros más importantes de todo el mundo.

Levon Avagyan

Armenian-born pianist Levon Avagyan has been awarded prizes at more than 15 international competitions, including First Prize and the audience prize and several further special awards at the 2017 Maria Canals International Music Competition in Barcelona. Recent solo engagements include performances with the Madrid, Bilbao, Porto and Tenerife Symphony orchestras, the Barcelona Symphony and Catalonia National Orchestra, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, the Slovak Sinfonietta, the Imola Chamber Orchestra and the Young Chamber Orchestra of Stuttgart. Avagyan regularly appears at festivals such as Kissinger Sommer, Marbella International Piano Festival, Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Next Generation Classical Festival, Elisarion Piano Festival, Vaduz Classic Festival, Arsonore and Alpenarte. He is a member of the International Music Academy in Fürstentum Liechtenstein and holds a scholarship from the Yamaha Music Foundation of Europe. In 2018 Avagyan graduated from the University of Music and Performing Arts, Graz, where he studied with Milana Chernyavska. www.levonavagyan.com

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His appointment in 1757 as *maestro di capilla* and organist at the Escorial, the royal palace established by Philip II of Spain, allowed Antonio Soler to mix with fellow court musicians, among whom was Domenico Scarlatti, whose influence was to remain profound. Soler wrote some 150 sonatas, his greatest compositional memorial, most for the young prince, Don Gabriel. The works in this volume reveal Soler's mastery of dashing bravura and his exploitation of a full keyboard range in *Sonata No. 88*, felicities of hand-crossing in *Sonata No. 89*, and his awareness of the contemporary influence of Haydn in *Sonata No. 92*.



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**Antonio
SOLER**
(1729–1783)



Keyboard Sonatas Nos. 87–92

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|----|--|-------|
| 1 | Sonata No. 87 in G minor | 6:56 |
| 2 | Sonata No. 88 in D flat major | 5:00 |
| 3 | Sonata No. 89 in F major | 4:25 |
| 4 | Sonata No. 90 in F sharp major | 6:03 |
| | Sonata No. 91 in C major, Op. 4, No. 1 | 21:37 |
| 5 | I. – | 7:53 |
| 6 | II. Allegro di molto | 4:37 |
| 7 | III. Minuetto I: Andante maestoso – Minuetto II: Allegro | 4:17 |
| 8 | IV. Allegro pastoril | 4:47 |
| | Sonata No. 92 in D major, Op. 4, No. 2 | 22:05 |
| 9 | I. – | 7:38 |
| 10 | II. Presto | 4:33 |
| 11 | III. Minuetto I: Andante largo – Minuetto II: Allegro | 7:12 |
| 12 | IV. Allegro pastoril | 2:40 |

Levon Avagyan, Piano

1st Prize, 63rd Maria Canals International Music Competition of Barcelona, 2017

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Playing Time
66:30



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