

DOMENICO SCARLATTI ADVENTURES

ESSAYS TO COMMEMORATE  
THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH

AD PARNASSUM STUDIES 3

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DOMENICO SCARLATTI ADVENTURES  
ESSAYS TO COMMEMORATE  
THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH

*Edited by Massimiliano Sala & W. Dean Sutcliffe*

*Ad Parnassum Studies*

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# CONTENTS

<i>Prefazione</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix
COLIN TIMMS	
<i>A New Cantata by Domenico Scarlatti</i> <i>(Words by Antonio Ottoboni)</i>	I
JOÃO PEDRO D'ALVARENGA	
<i>Domenico Scarlatti in the 1720s: Portugal, Travelling</i> <i>and the Italianization of the Portuguese Musical Scene</i>	17
SERGUEI N. PROZHOGUIN	
<i>Rileggendo la lettera di Domenico Scarlatti</i>	69
EMILIA FADINI	
<i>Domenico Scarlatti: integrazione tra lo stile andaluso</i> <i>e lo stile italiano</i>	155
SARA GROSS CEBALLOS	
<i>Scarlatti and María Bárbara: A Study of Musical Portraiture</i>	197
ANDREA COEN E VALERIO LOSITO	
<i>Ipotesi sulla destinazione strumentale di cinque sonate per</i> <i>strumento melodico e basso continuo di Domenico Scarlatti</i>	225
JOEL SHEVELOFF	
<i>Scarlatti's Duck-Billed Platypus: K. 87</i>	241
CHRIS WILLIS	
<i>One-Man Show: Improvisation as Theatre in</i> <i>Domenico Scarlatti's Keyboard Sonatas</i>	271
TODD DECKER	
<i>The Essercizi and the Editors: Visual Virtuosity,</i> <i>Large-Scale Form and Editorial Reception</i>	309

JACQUELINE OGEIL	
<i>Did Domenico Scarlatti Compose     the First Great Piano Music?</i>	343
W. DEAN SUTCLIFFE	
<i>Temporality in Domenico Scarlatti</i>	369
ROHAN H. STEWART-MACDONALD	
<i>The Minor Mode as Archaic Signifier in the Solo Keyboard     Works of Domenico Scarlatti and Muzio Clementi</i>	401
CONTRIBUTORS	445
INDEX OF NAMES	449

## PREFAZIONE

**Q**UALCHE ANNO FA ricevetti una cordialissima lettera da Chappell White, il quale, a conoscenza del volume miscellaneo che stavo preparando su Giovanni Battista Viotti<sup>1</sup>, mi scrisse che era molto contento che la ricerca stesse affrontando lo studio di un compositore tanto valido quanto ancora sconosciuto ai più. Le parole di White mi diedero conforto e stimolo nel proseguire lo studio di compositori che, nonostante le loro musiche siano eseguite più o meno frequentemente, risultano ancora relegati a nascosti satelliti di pianeti che li adombrano. Negli ultimi anni la musicologia sta facendo molti sforzi per diradare la nebbia calata col tempo su quelle realtà che hanno partecipato attivamente, anche se in modo differente, a costruire la storia della musica.

L'interpretazione dei processi storici si basa necessariamente sull'esegesi delle fonti documentarie, ma si avvale anche dell'analisi dei più intimi e complessi rapporti che caratterizzano una società, e il fatto musicale è prodotto diretto dell'agire di una collettività, sia che si parli della figura di un compositore o della sua opera sia che si tratti di speculazione teorica o del più generico, ma articolato, 'fare musica'. Se vogliamo parlare di una società musicale come insieme organizzato di individui che si occupano di musica e che fra loro si relazionano per costituire una comunità, non possiamo esimerci dall'indagare tutti gli attori di un simile contesto, siano essi protagonisti o meno. E tra i tanti personaggi vanno considerati non solo i compositori, ma anche coloro che si sono occupati di teoria, cercando di cogliere la complessità che l'interpretazione di un linguaggio (anche nuovo) richiede; questi ultimi sono stati determinanti nel misurare e influenzare i cambiamenti del gusto, ma anche nel cogliere la peculiarità e la molteplicità del fatto musicale che spesso la storiografia posteriore hanno contribuito a semplificare.

Il ricorso alla teoria musicale coeva, divenuto prassi ormai radicata nella musicologia odierna, ci aiuta a riconsiderare alcune ipotesi metodologiche. Troppo spesso, infatti, si limita l'interpretazione alla sola analisi di un'opera, senza riuscire a distinguerne le effettive alterità<sup>2</sup>. Alla luce di tale riflessione

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<sup>1</sup>. *Giovanni Battista Viotti. A Composer between the Two Revolutions*, a cura di Massimiliano Sala, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2006 (Ad Parnassum Studies, 2).

<sup>2</sup>. Sono benvenuti tra l'altro i lavori che, attraverso lo studio della trattatistica e della ricezione, forniscono un'analisi storica ed estetica eterogenea e più 'tollerante'. Tra

PREFAZIONE

si è deciso di intraprendere la pubblicazione di questo volume di saggi, con l'intenzione cioè di porre l'attenzione su alcune specifiche problematiche che contribuiscono a fornire una migliore visione d'insieme della musica di Domenico Scarlatti. Da qui la particolarità del titolo: *Domenico Scarlatti Adventures*.

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Per concludere queste brevi note, vorrei ringraziare tutti coloro che hanno reso possibile la realizzazione di questo volume.

In primo luogo, un sentito ringraziamento va ai miei colleghi del *Centro Studi Opera omnia Luigi Boccherini* di Lucca per il loro prezioso aiuto nella preparazione editoriale del libro: in particolare a Roberto Illiano e Fulvia Morabito per i lavori sui testi, e a Lorenzo Frassà per gli esempi musicali.

In secondo luogo, allo staff editoriale di *Ad Parnassum*, a Hugh Ward-Perkins (Verona), a Roberto De Caro, Andrea Schiavina e all'intero staff delle Ut Orpheus Edizioni (Bologna) per aver sostenuto il progetto sin dall'inizio.

Infine, uno speciale ringraziamento a W. Dean Sutcliffe per tutte le indicazioni, i suggerimenti e gli scambi di idee profusi prima e durante la preparazione del volume, nonché per l'impegno e l'attenzione con cui ha svolto il lavoro editoriale sui testi.

Massimiliano Sala  
Lucca

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questi si veda, ad esempio, MORROW, Mary Sue. *German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issue in Instrumental Music*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1997 e ELLIS, Katharine. *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: «La revue et Gazette musicale de Paris»*, 1834-80, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1995.

## INTRODUCTION

WHILE THE PUBLICATION of both single- and multi-author studies of composers in their anniversary years has become a predictable part of today's musicological landscape, such works still have their uses. If this is less apparent in the case of some of the biggest names, where suspicions of overkill or 'cashing in' may well be raised, the practice can be more readily justified for that vast majority of less celebrated — and commercially less attractive — composers. Marking anniversaries in such a way can give them a better chance to have their voices heard, and can act as a spur to activities on a larger scale. An outstanding recent example of this is the initiating of a complete scholarly edition of the works of Luigi Boccherini to mark the two-hundredth year since his death in 1805<sup>1</sup>. Boccherini is of course (or should be seen as) a major figure of the eighteenth century, but the fact that no opera omnia had ever been finished before suggests that anniversaries can bring a welcome sense of moral imperative in their wake.

If the prospect of a collected edition still seems remote for Domenico Scarlatti, this does not reflect his current status as a composer. He is certainly not a minor figure as far as performance and recording go, nor in the general estimation of the quality of his music (by which is meant mainly his keyboard sonatas). However, he is, relatively speaking, a minor figure musicologically, for reasons that have been well understood and often discussed. The many impediments to larger-scale musicological engagement reach into nearly every category one can think of: biography, sources, transmission, organology, style history, analysis. Scarlatti research has often been carried out in relatively isolated pockets, defined by very different epistemological values, and often enough marked by strong polemics between various parties. The lack of certain knowledge and agreed priorities can be enticing, but it can also produce mutual frustrations.

In the light of such factors, the present collection could not offer, and is not intended to offer, a comprehensive survey of Scarlatti research; rather, we present a series of case studies. Not everyone approached was ultimately

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<sup>1</sup>. BOCCHERINI, Luigi. *Opera omnia*, Italian National Edition, Critical Edition under the Direction of Christian Speck, in collaboration with *Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini-Onlus* and *Stichting-Fondazione Pietro Antonio Locatelli*, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2005—.

able to contribute to the volume, but what has resulted is by any measure a substantial publication. The title reflects not just the feeling of adventure that seems to animate the keyboard sonatas, but also the fact that a certain intrepid spirit is required when approaching any aspect of the world of Scarlatti.

The first two chapters remind us immediately that Domenico spent a good deal of his creative life writing sacred and secular vocal music. Colin Timms reports on the discovery of a new cantata by Scarlatti from his Roman period, to a text by Antonio Ottoboni; what is more, he is able to offer an almost certain date of composition, a great triumph in the context of Scarlatti studies. In noting the «fascinating variety of textures» (p. 15) in this work and the composer's great responsiveness to the sound and meaning of words, Timms makes one think of comparable attributes in the keyboard sonatas; perhaps it is inevitable, given the present state of knowledge and research, that we filter our appreciation of such genres through our conceptions of the keyboard music. João Pedro d'Alvarenga is also able to provide us with some new 'hard facts' — above all, he confirms details of two visits made by the composer to Paris in the mid-1720s and tries to integrate these with other puzzles about the composer's movements during that decade. While the emergence of such details as two brief visits to a city might be a quite routine addition to the body of knowledge about many composers, in the case of Scarlatti, this is sensational news. Characteristically, though, such new information prompts more questions than it answers. Did Scarlatti perform whilst in Paris? If so, to whom? Why has no further corroboration of these visits to one of Europe's cultural capitals of the time been discovered, whether through newspapers or letters? D'Alvarenga gently suggests, backing up the work of Jane Clark, that Scarlatti may have been fulfilling a role than was as much political or diplomatic as musical. Certainly the fact that he ended up delivering the replacement lens for a telescope to the Portuguese court is an unforgettable detail.

It certainly seems as if the amount of time Scarlatti actually spent in Lisbon during the 1720s is continuing to shrink, after earlier publications by Gerhard Doderer and Roberto Pagano had already suggested whittling it down<sup>2</sup>. If d'Alvarenga's chapter is a mine of new perspectives and possibilities, the same may be said of Serguei N. Prozhoguin's extremely close reading of Scarlatti's famous letter to the Duke of Alba, which even proposes a possible redating

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<sup>2</sup>. Pagano has commented in detail on the earlier Portuguese version of d'Alvarenga's chapter in the recent revised and translated version of his dual biography *Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti: Two Lives in One*, translated by Frederick Hammond, Hillsdale (NY), Pendragon, 2006 (Lives in Music, 6).

of the letter to the 1740s, together with the tantalizing suggestion that the composer, with his disparaging reference to «moderni teatristi Compositori», may have been alluding to something very close to home, the so-called ‘opera craze’ in Madrid that had been engineered by Farinelli.

Another thing that remains unclear about the ‘Lisbon decade’ is the extent of the interaction between Scarlatti and Princess María Bárbara, yet on a larger pan-Iberian scale there can be no doubt of the closeness of their musical relationship. Sara Gross Ceballos studies this relationship to an extent unprecedented in the literature, connecting it with a wider eighteenth-century tradition of musical portraiture as well as offering a striking new perspective on the «stylistic hybridity» and «multiculturalism» (p. 200) of the composer’s sonatas. Beyond this, though, she suggests a far stronger sense of agency for María Bárbara in this relationship, in effect a collaborative meaning between artist and patron. This seems particularly well taken given what a remarkable individual María Bárbara was in her own right. Emilia Fadini also attends to specifically Spanish circumstances, offering an intensive scrutiny of what has sometimes been one of the touchiest fields of Scarlatti interpretation — the presence and relevance of elements of flamenco and *cante jondo* in the sonatas. She can even suggest that theoretical acquaintance with such phenomena as modal scale types is needed for informed editorial decision-making. Andrea Coen and Valerio Losito investigate another puzzle in the keyboard output — the so-called ‘melo-bass’ sonatas, not even determinate in number, which seem to be conceived not for solo keyboard but rather melody instrument and continuo. In their startling proposal that at least some of the sonatas might have been written for viola d’amore (indeed, the Madrid court’s resident player, José Herrando), they make a useful distinction within that grey area around what counts as ‘idiomatic’ writing for a particular instrument: «esigenza tecnica» and «esigenza d’esecuzione».

In a change of pace, Joel Sheveloff then offers something that has been rare in the literature: a sustained close reading of a single Scarlatti sonata, but one where source and analytical concerns are wholly integrated, together with many suggestions regarding an appropriate style of performance. Chris Willis re-examines one of the commonest threads in Scarlatti reception, improvisation, and turns it to quite new account. As well as offering some new models for the sense of musical process in the sonatas, he gets us thinking about the social and communicative implications of the composer’s sonata writing, suggesting new subtleties to the conception of the roles of performer, listener and composer in a Scarlatti sonata performance. He also argues for the strongly mediated character of this apparently spontaneous and physically exuberant style of

music. Todd Decker in turn revitalizes another familiar critical perspective on the sonatas — pedagogy. He continues Willis's concern with the meanings of virtuosity, not just as heard but as seen, especially relevant given the vivid visual displays written into the *Essercizi*. At the same time Decker returns to the theme exposed by Sheveloff and Fadini, of how editorial decisions affect our perception of 'the music'. In this case, though, he deals primarily with the issue of the arrangement of the thirty sonatas as a whole, building on his thesis that they represent a carefully planned and integral succession. And, one of many tantalizing possibilities thrown out in the course of this collection, he suggests that we might want to look once more at the groups of thirty found elsewhere in the sources to see if they too may be understood as larger-scale wholes.

Jacqueline Ogeil continues one of the defining operations of *Domenico Scarlatti Adventures* by taking a staple ingredient of the composer's reception and giving it a fresh twist. In this case she is venturing into one of the more disputed territories, the question of which keyboard instruments were not so much possible as the preferred destinations for the composer's extraordinary keyboard textures. Referring to a range of other keyboard works of the time, by such figures as Della Ciaja, Giustini, Platti and the composer's father Alessandro, she looks for signs of what we might take to be idiomatic writing for the early piano, a similar project to that undertaken by Coen and Losito in their search for instrument-specific traces in the sonatas. Here the debate focuses on what one might call intrinsic signs, invoking such features as the extensive melodic use of repeated notes and the use of *gradatio*-type sequences. The final two chapters work with broader premises. My investigation of temporality in Scarlatti is also in fact based on several common perceptions, concerning the immediacy and «present tenseness» (p. 374) of the sonatas, but zooms out to consider how such attributes embody an approach to and use of (musical) time. This is not only a subject of interest in its own right, it is a way of suggesting that Scarlatti research, as well as continuing to attend to the many difficult musicological issues, should aim to think big. Otherwise we will never get around to making the claims for the significance of this artist for the culture of the eighteenth century that are, I believe, his due. After all, it has taken an outsider to the field, Richard Taruskin, to make this simple but momentous statement in his recent *Oxford History of Western Music*: that Scarlatti «exemplified the esthetic of the Enlightenment better, perhaps, than any other musician of his time»<sup>3</sup>. In the final chapter, Rohan H. Stewart-

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<sup>3</sup>. TARUSKIN, Richard. *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 6 vols., New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, vol. II, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, p. 390.

MacDonald takes a much wider view than one might expect from a collection dedicated to one composer, but one that delivers a big pay-off in the end. His account of the minor mode as archaic signifier helps us to situate Domenico Scarlatti in a much wider phenomenon of the eighteenth century, the move to major, with its correspondingly more specialized, arguably historically more static, treatment of the major's modal 'shadow'. This also entails a concentrated approach to the musical relationship between Scarlatti and Clementi. Among so many uncertainties about the posthumous promulgation of Scarlatti's sonatas, it is beyond doubt that Clementi knew many of them — whereas this remains conjectural for specific figures within the Austro-Bohemian environment, for all the detailed work on this area by, among others, Federico Celestini<sup>4</sup>.

If anniversary publications may sometimes offer a chance to take stock, the present collection, I would like to think, is rather pushing forward with renewed energy. This would be only too appropriate for the composer under consideration. Many thanks to all the authors for their co-operation and for the quality of their work, and especially to Massimiliano Sala and Roberto Illiano for their constant help in bringing this volume to light before the magical anniversary year has reached an end.

*W. Dean Sutcliffe*  
Auckland, 31 August 2007

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<sup>4</sup>. See CELESTINI, Federico. 'Die Scarlatti-Rezeption bei Haydn und die Entfaltung der Klaviertechnik in dessen frühen Klaviersonaten', in: *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft. Beihefte der Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, XLVII (1999), pp. 95-127, and ID. *Die frühen Klaviersonaten von Joseph Haydn. Eine vergleichende Studie*, Tutzing, Hans Schneider, 2004 (*Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*, 52).