

Cedille Records
CDR 9000 004

Padre Antonio Soler

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David Schrader, harpsichord

PADRE ANTONIO SOLER (1729–1783)
David Schrader, harpsichord

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|-------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Fandango in D minor | (12:12) |
| 2 | Sonata No. 4 in G major | (4:38) |
| 3 | Sonata No. 9 in C major | (5:31) |
| 4 | Sonata No. 16 in E-flat major | (6:44) |
| 5 | Sonata No. 24 in D minor | (7:41) |
| 6 | Sonata No. 25 in D minor | (6:07) |
| 7-8 | Sonata No. 60 in C major | (10:02) |
| | 7 I. Andantino | (5:57) |
| | 8 II. Allegro vivo | (4:02) |
| 9-11 | Sonata No. 63 in F major | (19:51) |
| | 9 I. Cantabile | (9:10) |
| | 10 II. Allegro | (5:42) |
| | 11 III. Intento | (4:51) |

TT: (73:51)

Cedille Records wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Fox Point Evangelical Lutheran Church of Milwaukee for the use of its harpsichord.

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5255 N. Lakewood Ave Chicago IL 60640 USA
773.989.2515 • info@cedillerecords.org
www.cedillerecords.org

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THE KEYBOARD MUSIC OF SOLER

notes by David Schrader

Although Padre Antonio Soler composed numerous works for the church and other venues, he is best known for his keyboard sonatas. These highly varied works occupy a central position in Soler's total output and represent a unique contribution to the repertoire for harpsichord, organ, and fortepiano.

Antonio Francisco Javier Jose Soler y Ramos was baptized on December 3, 1729. Destined for a career in the church, in 1736 he entered the choir school of the great Catalan monastery of Montserrat, where he studied with the monastery's "Maestro," Benito Esteve, and its organist, Benito Valls. After becoming *maestro de capilla* at Lérida circa 1750, Soler was ordained to the subdiaconate in 1752. He entered the Hieronimite monastery at El Escorial, the large palace and college cum monastery established a century and a half earlier by King Philip

II, taking the habit on September 25, 1752 and making his life profession as a monk on September 29, 1753. Soler became *maestro de capilla* at El Escorial in 1757, upon the death of the incumbent *maestro*. The monastery's extant records, or *actos capitulares*, note that Soler had an excellent command of Latin, organ playing, and musical composition, and that his conduct and application to his discipline were exemplary.

Soler is known for his theoretical writings, which, in addition to the famous *Llave de le modulación* (key to modulation) of 1762, even include a treatise on the conversion rates between Catalan and Castilian currencies. While the principles contained in the *Llave* are still recognized as valid, it is well to note that the modulations were considered radical enough in eighteenth century Spain to elicit critical rebuttal to which

Soler responded with a 1765 tract entitled *Satisfacción a los reparos precisos* (reply to specific objections).

Like his illustrious predecessor at the Spanish court, Domenico Scarlatti, Soler also enjoyed the patronage of a member of the royal family, Prince Gabriel, the son of Charles III. Soler wrote many of his sonatas for the prince, who also inspired Soler's Six Concerti for Two Organs and his quintets for keyboard and strings. While Scarlatti's influence on Soler is evident, it is well to note some salient differences in the two composers' works for keyboard. Soler composed more sonatas in a relatively moderate tempo than did Scarlatti; the *acciaccaturas* (dissonant notes played quickly in between harmonic tones) so germane to Scarlatti's style rarely appear in Soler's works; and Soler made frequent use of Alberti bass patterns, which Scarlatti avoided. Similarities, however, include the demand for virtuosic technique, a fondness for syncopations, and

a thorough infusion of Spanish folk music.

Soler's music spans two eras. Born into the latter part of the baroque period, Soler lived to compose music reflective of a later tradition. The pieces on this recording range from the one-movement sonatas that figure forth the work of Scarlatti to two and three-movement sonatas written in a more classical style.

The Fandango is a dance of courtship that originated in Andalusia (the southern part of Spain) in the early eighteenth century. It had become popular with the aristocracy by the middle of the century and was represented by composers other than Soler, most notably Luigi Boccherini, who included a fandango in one of his string quintets. The dance is of a passionate character, to say the least, and was known to raise just enough prurient eyebrows to be attractively naughty to its hearers. Soler's Fandango is constructed

over a constant harmonic pattern (I call it an example of eighteenth century minimalism) and increases in intensity and velocity toward the end. It is remarkable that the composer managed to sustain such energy and interest over 450 measures of music. The virtuosity and imagination ever present in this fandango — hand-crossings, trills, syncopations, all that can be brought forth on the keyboard — is combined with Spanish folk music to produce a truly sizzling dance.

The sonatas in G major, C major, E-flat major, and the two in D minor (the second of which is Soler's "dorian mode" sonata) reflect the esthetic of the late baroque, as well as some of Scarlatti's influence. At the same time, however, the regularity of Soler's phrasing, as well as other differences in keyboard styles previously noted, demonstrate the independence of Soler's musical thoughts from those of Scarlatti. Still, the love of diabolical hand crossings, such as those found in the early C major sonata; the tender

lyricism of the E-flat sonata; and the passionate drive of the D minor sonatas show that Soler and Scarlatti did share something of a common heritage.

In the two and three movement sonatas from the classical period, the binary structure of the preceding pieces is transformed into a nascent sonata-allegro form. Also present in these works is the characteristic harmonic tension and logic that identifies the music of the late eighteenth century as well as an intense rhythmic drive that can, upon occasion, suggest scores of hungry cats being summoned to the feeding trough (e.g., second movement of the F major sonata). While the "baroque" sonatas also have a strong motoric rhythm, the more cadential harmony of those pieces makes their rhythm seem more integral to their intent. In the classical works, on the other hand, the rhythm acts as a rigorous background for the struggle between larger harmonic areas (e.g., tonic vs. dominant). The sonata in F

major, however, includes a reactionary twist: its third movement is an *intento*, or fugue, whose marvelously intricate counterpoint suddenly gives way to a thoroughly classical, seven-bar, quasi-operatic coda!

The changes in accidentals that occur periodically throughout the disc and the embellishments not already added by the composer are supplied by the performer in accordance with performance practice applicable to the style of eighteenth century Spanish music. All repeats are observed except for those in the E-flat major sonata (No. 16). Repeated passages tend to be more embellished the second time through. The harpsichord was tuned to A=415.

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT

The large (8-foot) single-manual harpsichord used in this recording was built by Paul Y. Irvin of Glenview, Illinois in 1989. It has a five-octave range of FF-g³, two sets of unison strings, and a buff stop. Its design was inspired by the sound and acoustical design of a small 1681 Giusti harpsichord now in the Germanisches Museum, Nürnberg.

A NOTE FROM THE PRODUCER

Having found the sound on many harpsichord recordings disturbingly close-up and edgy, we decided to record this music with a pair of Neumann U87s — microphones renowned for their warm sound — set back a bit from the instrument. We believe this equipment and technique provides for more comfortable and enjoyable listening without any loss of detail, and also captures especially well the resonant qualities of the large, Paul Y. Irvin harpsichord.

ABOUT THE PERFORMER

Born in Chicago in 1952, David Schrader received his Performer's Certificate (1975), Masters (1976), and Doctor of Music Degree (1987) from Indiana University and is now a Professor at Roosevelt University's Chicago Musical College. A familiar figure to audiences in the Windy City, the multifaceted Schrader has been hailed for his performances of baroque and classical repertoire on harpsichord and fortepiano, and music of vastly divergent styles and eras on organ and piano. Mr. Schrader has appeared in recital and performed with major orchestras throughout Europe and North America. American engagements have included performances at the Aspen Music Festival, the Michigan Mozart Festival with Roger Norrington (November 1989), and frequent appearances as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under such celebrated conductors as Sir Georg Solti, Daniel Barenboim, Claudio Abbado, and Erich Leinsdorf. Mr. Schrader is currently organist at Chicago's Church of the Ascension and performs regularly as keyboardist and soloist with two acclaimed Chicago ensembles specializing in 18th century music: *Music of the Baroque* and the period instrument *City Musik*. Previous recordings include Bach multiple harpsichord concertos with Igor Kipnis and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra conducted by Karl Munchinger on the Intercord label and the continuo work on three London Records releases: Haydn's *The Creation*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, all with the Chicago Symphony under the baton of Maestro Solti. In addition to commercial recordings, Mr. Schrader has played many live broadcast concerts from the studios of Chicago radio station WFMT and has been featured on National Public Radio.



David Schrader (photo: Andrew Halpern)