

Pietro Domenico
Paradies

COMPLETE SONATAS FOR HARPSICHORD

Alessandro Simonetto



Pietro Domenico Paradies 1707-1791

Complete Sonatas for Harpsichord | Sonate di Gravicembalo

Sonata No.1 in G		Sonata No.12 in C	
1. I. Allegro	4'12	13. I. Allegro	7'17
2. II. Vivace	3'25	14. II. Giga. Presto	3'29
Sonata No.10 in D		Sonata No.4 in C minor	
3. I. Vivace	5'51	15. I. Andante	3'50
4. II. Toccata. Andante	3'05	16. II. Minuetto. (Moderato)	2'24
Sonata No.5 in F		Sonata No.2 in B flat	
5. I. Presto	4'58	17. I. Andante	5'09
6. II. Giga. Allegro	2'19	18. II. Allegro	3'13
Sonata No.11 in F		Sonata No.7 in B flat	
7. I. Moderato	6'25	19. I. Allegro	6'52
8. II. Andante	3'41	20. II. Presto	2'38
Sonata No.9 in A minor		Sonata No.3 in E	
9. I. Allegro	5'43	21. I. Presto	3'26
10. II. Andante	3'59	22. II. Aria. Larghetto	6'10
Sonata No.6 in A 'Toccata'		Sonata No.8 in E minor	
11. I. Vivace	6'04	23. I. Allegro	7'38
12. II. Toccata. Allegro	3'03	24. II. Toccata. Presto	2'34

Alessandro Simonetto *harpsichord*

Pietro Domenico Paradisi (1707-1791) is something of a shadowy figure in the history of music. Little is known about him and lexicographers have had trouble, it seems, even getting his name right: contemporary sources give his name as Paradies, though never Paradisi, suggesting the latter to be a more modern adaptation. His occasional use of the epithet 'Napolitano' after his name suggests he was born in or in the vicinity of Naples. He was most probably a pupil of Nicola Porpora (1686-1768) and began composing primarily for the theatre. In 1746 he moved to London where he established himself as a teacher of the harpsichord and voice where both the German operatic soprano, Gertrud Elisabeth Mara (1749-1823) and possibly Thomas Linley the elder (1733-1795), the English bass, pursued their studies with him.

Today, his reputation rests on a collection of twelve harpsichord sonatas, presented here on the harpsichord. This collection appeared in 1754 when it was issued by the London publisher, John Johnson, whose business, The Harp & Crown, was situated opposite the church of St. Mary-le-bow at Cheapside – a site now occupied by a well-known coffeehouse chain. Published as *Sonate di Gravicembalo | dedicate | a | Sua Altezza Reale | La Principessa Augusta | da | Pier Domenico Paradies | Napolitano.*, the ambiguity of the name of the dedicatee suggests either Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg (1719-1772) or her daughter, Princess Augusta of Great Britain (1737-1813). However, given the seniority of the former, one can safely assume that the dedication was intended for her. The work opens with an address to the dedicatee, curiously, written in Italian. It is reproduced here in translation as follows:

Your Royal Highness

I have been in doubt for some time, whether or not I should take the liberty of presenting my compositions to Your Royal Highness. The ardent desire, which I had to give some public proof of my humble respect, made me believe I should not let this opportunity pass; on the other hand The Work seemed of too small importance to dare to ask that the glorious Name of Your Royal Highness be on the front, but in the end,

on reflection, that Your Royal Highness does not disdain to add the Ornament of Music to innumerable other gifts, which adorn her soul, and renders it the object of universal esteem and veneration; and having been chosen for the great honour of cultivating the admirable natural dispositions, and the genius, which she has for this study, I flatter myself that this collection of mine may deserve a benign approval from her Clemency. And so I humbly beg Your Royal Highness to grant your most valuable Patronage no less to the Work, than to the Author, who is always with the deepest respect.

*Your Royal Highness's, most humble, devoted and obedient servant
Pier Domenico Paradies.¹*

It is followed, in English, by a patent of “royal privilege and licence”; a sort of precursor to copyright notices given by the British diplomat and politician, Robert Darcy, 4th Earl of Holderness (1718-1778) which runs as follows:

George R:

George the Second by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, & Ireland, Defender of the Faith &c. To all to whom these presents shall come Greeting. Whereas Our trusty & well beloved Pierre Dominique Paradies, hath Humbly besought Us to Grant him Our Royal Privilege and License, for the sole Printing and Publishing, his Compositions of Musick following, Viz: Twelve Sonatas for the Harpsichord, Six Grand Concertos for the Organ, & Harpsichord and some other pieces of Vocal and Instrumental Musick which are now ready for the Press; we being willing to give all Due Encouragement to Works of this Nature, are Graciously pleased to Condescend to his Request, & we – do therefore by these presents, so far as may be agreeable to the Statute, in – that Behalf made & provided: Grant unto him the said Pierre Dominique – Paradies, his Executors, Administrators & Assigns, our Royal License, for the sole Printing and Publishing his aforesaid Compositions, of Instrumental and Vocal Musick, for the Term of Fourteen Years, from the Date

hereof, strictly forbidding all our Subjects within our Kingdoms & Dominions, to reprint the same, either in the like or any other Volume, or Volumes whatsoever, or to Import, Buy, Vend, Utter, or distribute, any Copies thereof, reprinted beyond the Seas, during the aforesaid Term of Fourteen Years, without the Consent, or Approbation of the said Pierre Dominique Paradies, his Heirs, Executors, or Assigns, under their Hands & Seals, first had and Obtained, as they will Answer the Contrary at their Peril. Whereof the Commi'sioners, & other Officers of our Customs, The Master Wardens & Company of Stationers, are to take Notice, that the same may be Enter'd in the Register of the said Company, & that due Obedience be render'd thereunto.

*Given at Our Court at St. James's, the Twenty Eighth Day of November, 1754. in the Twenty Eighth Year of Our Reign
By his Majesty's Command,*

Holdernefse

The Earl of Holderness had earlier collaborated with George Frederic Handel (1685-1759) in the production of the latter's opera, *Deidamia* (1741) and from 1744-6 served as ambassador to Venice. It could well be that the Earl first met Paradies during his service in Italy and was responsible for the latter's decision to later relocate to London.

All the sonatas in the collection are formed from two contrasting movements; the first longer and the second shorter, usually in a shared key. All bear the influence of both Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) and Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757) through their structural idiom, innovative keyboard virtuosity, and various harmonic eccentricities.

The opening sonata, in G major, is comprised of an *Allegro* followed by a *Vivace*. The former, in common time, carefree and bristling with humorous grace notes, is superficially unassuming until sequences of slurred semiquavers begin to suggest all sorts of harmonic ambiguities. The second movement forms a vivid contrast in a restless 3/8 time signature; its writing altogether more robust.

The second sonata of the set is in B flat major; its opening movement a lyrical

¹ Translation by the author.

Andante in 2/4 featuring some rather wayward modulations where a contrasting section is presented in the dominant minor and is later mirrored in the tonic minor. The second movement, a lively *Giga: Allegro* in 12/8, is rife with melodic syncopations and keeps us on our toes with its breathless impetus and unlikely modulations.

The explosive energy of the opening movement of the third sonata, an exuberant *Presto* in 3/8, comes as rather a shock. In the blazing key of E major, it bristles with virtuosic gestures and an infectious *joie de vivre*. It is followed by a reflective *Aria: Larghetto e Cantabile* in the 2/4 whose serenity remains unperturbed.

While the first movement of the fourth sonata is in C minor, the second is in the major and is one of only three sonatas in the collection to adopt this key sequence. The grave lyricism of the first movement, an *Andante* in common time, spiced with the odd false relation, is contrasted by a sunlit *Minuetto* of naïve charm in 3/4.

The opening movement of the fifth sonata in F major, a fulgurating *Presto* in 2/4, like the third of the set, teems with virtuosic gestures and arresting modulations. Its companion movement is none other than a virile *Giga: Allegro* in 6/8 of boundless energy and crawling with chromatic inflections which hijack the melodic line.

The sixth sonata of the set, in A major, opens with a *Vivace* in 3/4 and is the only movement, save the second movement of the ninth sonata, to include actual dynamic markings in the score, suggesting a change of stops/manual. It is followed by one of the composer's evergreens, an *Allegro* which has become known as his "Toccatà", made famous by both Myra Hess (1890-1965) and Eileen Joyce (1908-1991).

The opening movement of the seventh sonata, in B flat major, is an *Allegro* in 2/4 which presents two contrasting ideas; the one a stately dotted rhythm; the other a flurry of scurrying triplets, rendering a character both cautious and resolute in turn while the second movement, an energetic *Presto* in 3/8, rounds things off in a decisive way.

The eighth sonata of the collection is in E minor and opens with an *Allegro* in 3/8 in which two contrasting ideas are juggled; the first in the tonic which worries away before the entry of the second, more unclouded one, in the relative major. Its role, however, is later reversed when it is presented in both the dominant minor and,

finally, in the tonic. The second movement, a lively toccata-style *Presto* in common time brings the sonata to a virtuosic close.

The ninth sonata, in A minor, opens with an *Allegro* in common time which crawls with all the unlikely modulations and false relations particular to the composer. Like the fourth sonata, the second movement is contrasted in the major, this time with an aristocratic *Andante* in 2/4 which, like the opening movement of the sixth, is complete with dynamic markings.

Like the previous and fourth sonatas, the tenth sonata also features a major/minor contrast between the two movements. The first, a 3/4 *Vivace* in D major, is rife with virtuosic arm crossing amidst scalic and arpeggic gestures and trill-clad imperious dotted rhythms. The contrasting *Presto* in 2/4 follows the toccata-style of many of its companion pieces

The penultimate sonata is in F major and opens with a poetic *Moderato* in cut common time; its language often improvisatory and comprising brief flashes of keyboard virtuosity of the Scarlatti genus. The second movement, a tranquil *Andante* in 3/8, singles this sonata out as the only one without a fast movement.

The final sonata of the collection is in C major and opens with a boldly energetic *Allegro* in common time which is an example of Paradisi's imagination and inventiveness at its most fulsome. The companion movement is a final *Giga: Presto* in 12/8 which dances to similar music as its brethren; its harmonic quirks and thrilling virtuosity providing an ample conclusion to this wonderful and unjustly neglected collection of sonatas.

© Mark Viner, London 2020



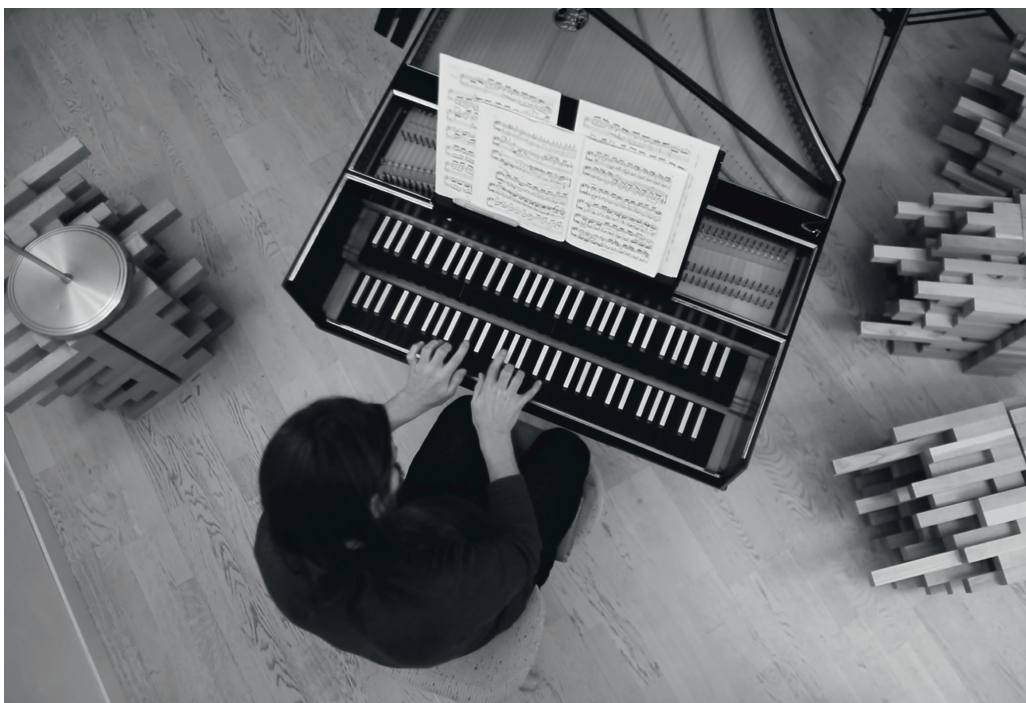
Alessandro Simonetto is a versatile musician and music producer. His preference for board instruments was clear from childhood, when he began to teach himself to play.

Alessandro started composing at a very early age. From 14 to 18 y.o. he wrote a cycle of Mazurkas, inspired by Chopin. He also studied jazz composition and silent-film music in depth, becoming a close friend of Eric James, the associate composer of Sir Charles Chaplin, until his death. A few minutes before one performance, in 2000, James placed a paper on the grand piano, and in front of the audience wrote: “Alessandro is a pianist of immense talent”.

Alessandro is mostly a classical musician with degrees in Pianoforte, Harpsichord and Electronic Music / Modern Composition. Absorbed by his work on over 250 recordings as a producer, Alessandro spent a long period without playing when he began recording himself at both the piano and the harpsichord, attracting widespread acclaim from the critics. The *Suittes voor Clavicembel* of Pieter Bustijn [Brilliant Classics 94187] was nominated Recording of the Month by Music-Web International (“Nearly eighty minutes of enormously appealing, high-octane invention superbly rendered by Alessandro Simonetto”). Furthermore, released on ÆVEA, the world première of *Leroy Shield: Laurel & Hardy’s Original Piano Music*, performed at the piano, was awarded (5 stars) both on classical and jazz/pop magazines worldwide (Mojo, Piano International, Teatro, The L&H Magazine, Intra-Tent Journal, Furore, Pözenkrant) as well as being widespread featured on radios worldwide (CBC/ICI Musique, RAI Radio 3, NPO, BR Klassik, IPR, Overture). This release was sold-out.

As a passionate of the genre, Alessandro also recorded the Complete Piano Works of Scott Joplin including 55 compositions. Recently Alessandro’s projects are dedication to recording for his own label: OnClassical, a digital label since 2004.

He is also the founder of the *Aevea Piano Prize*, a piano & chamber music competition, placed in Verona, featuring musicians from all over the world.



*Special thanks to Benedetta Salmini,
Elisabetta Guglielmin, Florindo Gazzola
& Simone Stella for their kind support.*

Recording: 8 March 2020 (Nos. 4 & 8); 14-15 March 2020 (Nos. 5-7 & 9); 21 March 2020 (Nos. 1-3);
3 April 2020 (Nos. 10-12), Saletta Acustica 'Eric James', Pove del Grappa, Vicenza, Italy
Recording, editing & mastering (32-bits): Alessandro Simonetto
An OnClassical production
Harpsichord built by William Horn harpsichord after Johannes Ruckers (Antwerp 1638) prepared by
Alessandro Simonetto and Florindo Gazzola
Tuning: A 415 Hz, Kirnberger III temperament
Artist photos: Benedetta Salmini
Cover: The Thames and the City (1746-47), by Giovanni Antonio Canal
commonly known as Canaletto (1697-1768)
© & © 2020 Brilliant Classics