

# Giustini

12 SONATAS OP.1

Paolo Zentilin *piano*





**Lodovico Giustini 1685-1743**

**12 Sonate da Cimbalo di piano e forte detto volgarmente di martelletti Op.1**

**Sonata No.1 in G minor**

1. I. Balletto: Spiritoso, ma non presto	3'23
2. II. Corrente: Allegro	1'59
3. III. Sarabanda: Grave	2'48
4. IV. Giga: Presto	1'32
5. V. Minuet: Affettuoso	0'58

**Sonata No.2 in C minor**

6. I. Grave	4'13
7. II. Corrente: Allegro	1'50
8. III. Giga: Grave	5'30
9. IV. Giga: Presto	2'04
10. V. Minuet	1'36

**Sonata No.3 in F**

11. I. Siciliana: Affettuoso	4'48
12. II. Canzone	2'18
13. III. Andante, ma non presto	2'51
14. IV. Giga: Presto	2'06

**Sonata No.4 in E minor**

15. I. Preludia: Largo	5'48
16. II. Presto	2'37
17. III. Sarabanda: Largo	1'44
18. IV. Giga: Allegro	2'10

**Sonata No.5 in D**

19. I. Preludio: Adagio e arpeggiato nell'acciaccature	5'07
20. II. Allegro	3'32
21. III. Affettuoso	3'01
22. IV. Corrente: Allegro	2'06
23. V. Tempo di Gavotta	2'16

**Sonata No.6 in B flat**

24. I. Preludio: Grave	4'12
25. II. Allegro assai	3'07
26. III. Dolce	4'57
27. IV. Giga: Allegro	2'09

**Sonata No.7 in G**

28. I. Allemanda: Andante	3'51
29. II. Corrente: Presto assai	2'59
30. III. Siciliana: Affettuoso	4'23
31. IV. Gavotta: Presto	2'08

**Sonata No.8 in A**

32. I. Sarabanda: Affettuoso	4'51
33. II. Allegro	3'09
34. III. Rondò: Affettuoso	2'22
35. IV. Giga: Prestissimo	2'33

**Sonata No.9 in C**

36. I. Sarabanda: Andante	4'53
37. II. Allemanda: Allegro	4'00
38. III. Rondò: Affettuoso	2'16
39. IV. Gavotta: Allegro	2'53

**Sonata No.10 in F minor**

40. I. Allemanda: Affettuoso	2'15
41. II. Canzone: Tempo di Gavotta	3'10
42. III. Allemanda: Grave e Affettuoso	2'16
43. IV. Corrente: Allegro assai	2'39

**Sonata No.11 in E**

44. I. Allemanda: Allegro ma non presto	1'47
45. II. Dolce	2'02
46. III. Gavotta	2'37
47. IV. Rondò: Affettuoso	1'51
48. V. Giga: Allegro assai	5'23

**Sonata No.12 in G**

49. I. Sarabanda: Largo	
50. II. Canzone	3'13
51. III. Siciliana: Affettuoso	3'27
52. IV. Giga: Presto assai	2'42
53. V. Minuet: Allegro	1'24

Paolo Zentilin *piano*

Pianos: Fazioli F 278 n. 1660 (Sonatas 1-6),  
Fazioli F 278 n. 1230 (Sonatas 7-12)

*Special thanks to Maurizio Baglini for the Fazioli  
used during the recording of the first six sonatas*

### Giustini Sonatas for Piano, performed by Paolo Zentilin

The invention of the piano, in around 1700, revolutionized the music world. The new instrument offered keyboardists unhampered musical expression, making it possible for a player to vary dynamics—from gentle whispers to forceful fanfares—simply by changing the amount of weight used when striking the keys, thus varying the force with which the mechanism’s hammers were thrust against its strings—something not available on the harpsichord, where quills simply pluck the strings at a steady volume. Eventually, in the wake of Mozart’s Romantic piano concertos of the 1780s, the piano would completely transform the concert hall (and the home music salon). But there is no evidence that the innovation affected the work of any composer before Lodovico Guistini (1685-1743) wrote the music heard on this disc, in 1732.

The piano’s genesis stemmed from a visit in the winter of 1688 by Grand Duke Ferdinando de’Medici to the Carnival celebrations in Venice. On his way home, he passed through Padua, and heard about a 33-year-old instrument builder named Bartolomeo Cristofori. Ferdinando was in need at the time of someone to tune and repair his large inventory of instruments back in Florence, and although the Paduan instrument builder at first said he didn’t want to go, the Grand Duke, remembered Cristofori, “replied that he would make me want to.” That settled the matter.

While maintaining the Medici instrument collection, Cristofori went on to develop his own instrumental inventions. The most stunning was a boxwood keyboard that sat atop a stand of gilded and shaded poplar, covered in red leather, with green taffeta and red ribbon. Its designer, underplaying the importance of his contribution, unpretentiously called the new instrument “a keyboard of cypress with *piano* [soft] and *forte* [loud].” But at its heart and

soul there was something revolutionary: a mechanical “action” that responded sensitively to a player’s touch, whether soft or hard, and allowing the hammers to fall back from the vibrating strings after contact, thus enabling them to quickly strike again. The sound produced, clipped and airy, lacked the depth and power of the modern instrument—this was a fragile forerunner of what we know as the majestic piano—but over time Cristofori’s keyboard ushered in a new era of music making.

Portuguese King Joao V, who was enamored of everything Italian, was among the first advocates of the new instrument, and composer Domenico Scarlatti was employed to give keyboard lessons both to his daughter, Maria Barbara, and to his younger brother, Dom António de Bragança. When Maria Barbara left for Spain in 1729 to marry the future Ferdinand VI, she brought along her keyboard teacher, and as many as five pianos. Giustini dedicated his twelve attractive *Sonatas for the Keyboard of Soft and Loud, Commonly Called the Little Hammers* to Dom Antonio. And they bear similarities to the music of Scarlatti, along with hints of other contemporary influences, including Domenico Zipoli’s keyboard music and Francesco Veracini’s violin sonatas. Giustini’s elegant sonatas are, in keeping with the times, dominated by movements in binary form, featuring dances and contrapuntal excursions, and displaying hints of the emerging *galant* style, which replaced busy Baroque *continuo* textures with a singing, more natural approach.

The composer seldom left his native Pistoia, where he worked as organist of the Congregazione dello Spirito Santo, except for a documented excursion to Florence from June to November in 1732, the city where Cristofori died the previous January. It’s possible he wrote these sonatas while there.

They are simply beautiful. Like other composers in the 1730s, Guistini

employed both repetition (favored in opening phrases) and sequences, using an interesting variety of rhythms, graceful ornaments, and occasional triplet figures. Uniquely, he sometimes unifies the music with recurring motives (such as in Sonata No.11, with the recurring thirty-second note idea that appears at the beginning). Unfortunately, the *p*'s and *f*'s sprinkled throughout the manuscript merely create simple *echo* effects (in which a phrase is repeated at a different dynamic level)—more sophisticated dynamic markings in piano music would develop only much later.

But Paolo Zentilin makes the most of what the composer has left us. Using a modern piano, he exhibits taste and technical mastery throughout. Exploiting the instrument's tonal resources while remaining respectful of a Baroque sensibility, his playing is consistently passionate but never overblown, with an attractive full-bodied tone, and an exquisite sense of dynamic control. Extremely soft passages are executed with no loss of rhythmic vitality. Ornaments are rendered with delicate crispness. The music's character—whether a regal dance or a study in tenderness—is always projected with sincerity and authenticity. No matter how intricate the counterpoint, the result remains genuinely heartfelt, never mechanical.

The pianist first learned about Giustini from his mentor, Roberto Prosseda, and he felt immediately attracted to this music, despite challenges from the start, including the necessity of unraveling errors and inconsistencies in the handwritten manuscript. He managed to purchase a printed edition, but even there he found many mistakes and wrong notes.

"In some cases," Mr. Zentilin explained, "when I spotted a note that didn't fit the music, I replaced it with another that fit the harmony. At other times I searched for a creative solution." For example, at the end of the first movement

of the fourth sonata, there is a D in the manuscript that doesn't work with the E minor chord. So, he inserted an arpeggio in the music with a resolution of D Sharp to E. "In another case, I did the contrary," he reported. "In the first movement of the seventh sonata, I placed a D, which was missing in the right-hand part."

He also committed the sonatas to memory, in order to allow himself more freedom in performance. Living with this music brought a number of surprises, including the wide range of moods: there is melancholy, he feels, in Sonata 10, nobility in Sonata 11, tragedy in Sonata 4, and enigmatic strangeness in Sonata 2. At the same time, this composer is very consistent in his use of thematic ideas. The richness of Giustini's craft inspired Paolo Zentilin to add his own ornaments and original cadenzas, notably in the last movement of Sonata 10.

"I faced two risks," the pianist recalled. "One was to try to play the modern piano like a harpsichord; the other was to play Baroque music as if it were Chopin. So, generally, I tried to be clear in my articulation, as it would be if I were using an historical instrument, but also to play with a pianistic approach—a wide sound palette and big contrasts, and the use of the pedals. I also improvised some of the ornamentation. Roberto Prosseda helped me to find the right interpretation.

"The project," he revealed, "has been an important opportunity for me to grow as a musician." And we are all the beneficiaries.

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*Pianist Stuart Isacoff is the author of "Temperament," "A Natural History of the Piano," and "When the World Stopped to Listen: Van Cliburn's Cold War Triumph and Its Aftermath."*

The Italian pianist **Paolo Zentilin** got Bachelor and Master degrees in piano performance at Music Conservatory “Giuseppe Tartini” of Trieste under the guidance of Teresa Trevisan, Massimo Gon and Flavio Zaccaria.

Later he studied with Riccardo Zadra and Federica Righini at the Piano Academy of Padua and with Alessandra Ammara and Roberto Prosseda at the MusicaFelix Academy of Prato.

He also graduated with a degree in Philosophy at University of Trieste.



Numerous master classes have contributed to his musical training, with musicians such as E. Torbianelli, B. Lupo, P. De Maria, R. Cominati, A. Hewitt, J. Kropfitsch, B. Van Oort, R. Kinka, P. Bordoni, K. Barth, A. Delle Vigne, S. Perticaroli, E. Virsaladze and others.

He takes solo recitals in Italy in Rome (Teatro Marcello), Milan (Auditorium Gaber), Venice (Palazzo Albrizzi), Ferrara (Ridotto del Teatro Comunale), Trieste (Assicurazioni Generali) and abroad in Macedonia (Ohrid). He also performed in Salzburg (Mozarteum, Wiener Saal), Florence (Palazzo Vecchio, Salone dei Cinquecento), Todi (Teatro Comunale), Briosco (Villa Medici Giuliani), Trieste (Ridotto del Teatro Verdi, Teatro Miela), Venice (Teatro La Fenice - Sale Apollinee).

He has also given piano duo recitals with Irene D’Andrea.

He studies Composition with Fabio Nieder at Trieste Conservatory. As a composer he prepared a transcription for accordion and piano of the Concerto for accordion and orchestra Op.146 by the Danish composer Niels Viggo Bentzon, for Wilhelm Hansen, arousing critical interest.



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