



GALUPPI
PIANO SONATAS

Fernanda Damiano *piano*

Baldassare Galuppi 1706-1785

Piano Sonatas

Piano Sonata No.2 in C minor

1. Larghetto 2'22
2. Allegro (però non troppo) 4'02
3. Allegro Assai 3'10

Piano Sonata No.3 in A

4. Andante 3'00
5. Allegro 3'27
6. Allegro 1'22

Piano Sonata No.6 in E-flat

7. Spiritoso 3'33
8. Allegro 3'19
9. Minué 2'27

Piano Sonata No.7 in G minor

10. Largo 4'02
11. Presto (Allegro vivacissimo) 1'53
12. Allegretto 4'00

Piano Sonata No.9 in E

13. Andante 6'04
14. Allegro 3'45
15. Grazioso 2'30

Piano Sonata No.10 in F

16. Andantino 11'42
17. Allegro 4'02
18. Giga. Presto 2'55

Fernanda Damiano *piano*

'The genius of Mr. Galuppi'

Born on 18 October 1706 on the island of Burano in the Venetian lagoon, Baldassare Galuppi trained as a teenager with Antonio Lotti, first organist at the Basilica San Marco. His talents were soon in demand, and Venetian theatres engaged him as a keyboard player and composer, in which capacity he wrote music for several successful shows such as *Gl'odi delusi del sangue* in 1728 and *Dorinda* the following year.

As Galuppi's fame spread he became known as 'Il Buranello', after his birthplace, and as his operas travelled, so did he – first to Mantova, then London (1741-3), Vienna (1748), Madrid (1749) and as far afield as St Petersburg, where he served as court composer to Catherine the Great from 1765 to 1768, all the while producing one box-office opera after another. Having returned home to Venice for good in 1768, he turned his energies to sacred music, and continued composing into old age; he completed the music for a Christmas mass for San Marco a few weeks before his death on 3 January 1785, after a two-month illness.

Galuppi's style was defined during his lifetime as 'gay, lively and brilliant', and the three adjectives aptly describe the two published sets of six keyboard sonatas published during his lifetime as Opp. 1 and 2. On the surface they occupy a modest, even insignificant place in Galuppi's huge catalogue of work. Yet as tastes for shows, carnival entertainments and royal command performances has evolved over the years, consigning most of the operas to obscurity, the sonatas have endured for their appealing melodic simplicity and their nostalgic character, which yet pours old wine into new bottles.

While Opp. 1 and 2 were likely composed for harpsichord, it must be noted that Galuppi was born only three years before Cristofori invented the piano in 1709. The Opus 1 collection was published in London by John Walsh in 1756, just 12 years before Johann Christian Bach is reputed to have performed the first public piano recital there. Most of the sonatas, like those of Domenico Scarlatti, sound well on either instrument, and are often even more successful on the piano.

Galuppi was seen as a musical conservative during his lifetime, and scholars of the last century tended to uphold that judgement, perhaps unfairly so. The style of these sonatas belongs to their time, exhibiting the ornamentation of the Baroque era, though less so in Galuppi's Opus 2, published by Walsh in 1759. He used elementary sonata-allegro forms, ranging from the simple binary dance forms of the Baroque to mono- and bi-thematic sonata-forms with embryonic development sections and complete recapitulations, as found in the works of Domenico Scarlatti, Pergolesi, and early Haydn. The texture is generally two-voiced, with right-hand *cantabile* melodies supported by a straightforward left-hand accompaniment of broken chords or Alberti bass figuration.

In 1782, Galuppi produced a further collection of six sonatas subtitled *Passatempo al cembalo*. He dedicated the collection to Catherine the Great's successor Paul on the occasion of his visit to Venice, as a final testament to the mutual esteem in which the ruling families of Italy and Russia held each other through the agency of Galuppi. Despite the earlier sonatas' publication in London, the composer's reputation in England was overshadowed by the resident figure of Handel. Galuppi's operas and *pasticcis* suffered from the well-attested rivalry between the capital's two dominant companies, the King's Theatre where they were staged and the Opera of the Nobility, headed by Nicola Porpora.

In this regard, the contemporary verdict of Charles Burney is worth examining. This inveterate traveller and diarist visited Galuppi in Venice in 1770, and found him 'natural, intelligent, and agreeable. He is in figure little and thin but has very much the look of a gentleman'. The composer spoke of his study to Burney as the room 'where he dirtied paper'. Having earlier dismissed Galuppi's style as 'the mirror of the frivolous lightness prevailing in Italy,' Burney now esteemed Galuppi as the most inspired of all Venetian composers, superior to Piccinni and Sacchini and second only to Jommelli: 'It seems that the genius of Mr. Galuppi, like the painter Titian's, becomes more animated with age. He cannot be less than seventy now, yet it is evident that his latest works and compositions for the church abound with more spirit, taste and imagination than those of any other period of his life.'

The composer's enduring popularity with English audiences is illustrated by *A Toccata of Galuppi's*, Robert Browning's poem of 1855. From a Victorian perspective, he is treated as the representative of a decadent past. Take the poem's first and seventh verses:

I
Oh Galuppi, Baldassarò, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

VII
What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions — "Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths — "Life might last! We can but try!"

Galuppi was recognised in his own time as a keyboard virtuoso. In 1772 Johann Adam Hiller wrote of the St Petersburg court during Galuppi's posting there: 'Chamber concerts were held every Wednesday in the anteroom of the imperial apartments, in order to enjoy the special style and fiery accuracy of the harpsichord sound of this great artist; thus the virtuoso obtained the general approval of the court.'

The three designated collections of sonatas discussed above represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of Galuppi's keyboard output, which includes many sonatas and 'toccate' still awaiting publication. Some of these sonatas follow the Italian single-movement model; others are cast in the three-movement form enshrined by Viennese classicism. A collection of 12 three-movement sonatas, drawn from this otherwise unpublished body of work, was edited by Giacomo Benvenuti (1885-1943) and issued by the Francesco Bongiovanni publishing house in 1920, and it is from this collection that Fernanda Damiano plays six sonatas on the present album.

The Venturi Institute in Brescia presently holds the manuscripts on which Benvenuti drew for his edition, except for the finales of the Third and Fourth Sonatas, located in the Liceo Musicale in Bologna. The edition brought Galuppi's music back into vogue during the postwar era thanks above all to the performances and recordings of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.

Writing in *Gramophone* in February 1949, Alec Robertson had the measure of both pianist and composer, Robert Browning too, when he wrote of the finale of the Fifth Sonata as issued by Decca: 'Robert Browning may be said to have reviewed this record in the two closing lines of his well-known poem: "Brave Galuppi! That was music! Good alike at grave and gay! / I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play." Which was nice of Browning, even if somewhat condescending. The playing of the attractive piece, with its saucy little tune... is that of a master.'

Fernanda Damiano becomes an heir to Michelangeli in her elegant, modern and informed readings, which brush off some anachronistic conventions from the 20th century with the aim of returning the listener to the glittering world of 18th-century Venice.

© *Christian Frattima*



“The young pianist Fernanda Damiano is a real marvel; she has a very remarkable pianism. She is destined, I am sure, to a very brilliant career” (A.Ciccolini).

“Fernanda Damiano is a young great artist and she was born to express the most beautiful and true part of music, the sensibility, the only and true gift of an artist” (A.M.Pennella).

After her first recital at the age of 8 years, **Fernanda Damiano** made her 10-year debut with Haydn’s D major concert at Teatro Impero in Trani and performed as a soloist in Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Austria and the United States. She has performed for major music festivals playing numerous concerts in Italy and abroad among which: Weill Recital Hall-Carnegie Hall New York, Avram Theater Southampton New York, St. Louis Church East Hampton New York, Gläserner Saal of the Musikverein of Vienna, University Church St. Mary the Virgin Oxford, Festival of Karditsa (Greece), Academy “Tibor Varga” Sion, Cremona Mondomusica, Emilia Romagna Festival, Serate Musicali, Teatro alla Scala Museum etc. She has won over 50 first prizes in national and international competitions among which: “Golden Classical Award International Piano Competition” New York, “Vienna Grand Prize Virtuoso”, “Golden Diapason” Pordenone, “Gioiella Giannoni” Piano Performance Award Piombino, “Bologna International Competition Andrea Baldi”.

Born in Taranto on 30/05/1995, she graduated at the age of 17 with ten honors and honorable mention at the “N. Piccinni” Conservatory of Bari with Cinzia Falco and obtained a Second Level Academic Diploma at the I.S.S.M. “F.Vittadini” of Pavia with one hundred and ten, praise and mention with Roberto Paruzzo. She currently attends the International Piano Academy “Incontri col Maestro” in Imola with Enrico Pace. Since 2017 she is Piano Professor at the Conservatory of Pavia. She is Piano Professor of the International courses of Musical Interpretation for the “Umbria Classica” Association (Foligno). She played live for Rai Radio 3, host of the program “Piazza Verdi” and she was a guest of the Musica Maestro broadcast on Radio 24. In September 2019 her first album was published, attached to the magazine “Suonare news”.