



Joanna Leach
Stodart square piano 1823

16 Scarlatti Sonatas

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01	Sonata in B minor, Kk 27	[3.51]
02	Sonata in F minor, Kk 466	[5.42]
03	Sonata in C major, Kk 461	[4.31]
04	Sonata in D minor, Kk. 1	[3.03]
05	Sonata in A minor, Kk. 54	[4.59]
06	Sonata in A major, Kk 113	[4.21]
07	Sonata in F minor, Kk 481	[7.31]
08	Sonata in E minor, Kk 198	[3.29]
09	Sonata in A major, Kk 208	[4.02]
10	Sonata in A major, Kk 209	[4.46]
11	Sonata in D major, Kk 491	[5.35]
12	Sonata in D major, Kk 492	[4.43]
13	Sonata in D minor ("Gavota"), Kk 64	[2.13]
14	Sonata in F sharp minor, Kk 25	[4.44]
15	Sonata in D minor, Kk 9	[3.34]
16	Sonata in E major, Kk 380	[5.24]
total duration:		[72.27]

Joanna Leach

English square piano by William Stodart, 1823

Domenico Scarlatti 1685-1757

1685 was the birth date of three great composers - Bach, Handel and Scarlatti. Domenico Scarlatti was born in Naples and began his highly successful musical career there as composer, organist and accomplished harpsichord player; afterwards moving to Venice and then Rome. In 1719, he was appointed Master of Music at the Lisbon royal court. His duties included the musical education of the king's talented daughter the Infanta Maria Barbara. He followed her to Spain when she married the Crown Prince Fernando and eventually became Queen of Spain.

The majority of his 550 keyboard sonatas, all single-movement works, were composed especially for Maria Barbara. Most of them were written for the harpsichord, although Scarlatti may have had the fortepiano in mind for some, since Maria Barbara possessed several of these very early instruments and his music suggests that he visualised the dynamic possibilities of the piano. Only 30 of the sonatas were published during his lifetime under the rather misleading collective title of *Essercizi per gravicembalo* which wrongly suggests that they were only exercises. Many composers titled as *etudes* some of their finest and most expressive compositions – Chopin, Liszt, Schumann and Debussy among others. The *Essercizi* were printed in London in 1738. It is only comparatively recently that full editions of his complete sonatas have been available.

Although Scarlatti was not always popular among the general public in the 19th century, he always attracted the attention of fine pianists. Clara Schumann [née Wieck], 1819-1896, regularly included some of his sonatas in her recitals, playing them on pianos of her own period. Among other admirers were Chopin, Brahms and Horowitz. Chopin

encouraged his pupils to explore the sonatas; he recognised them as masterpieces stating that *“If I were not afraid of incurring disfavour of many fools, I would play Scarlatti in my concerts. I maintain that there will come a time when Scarlatti will often be played in concerts, and people will appreciate and enjoy him.”* His prediction has been realised.

I chose these sonatas because they include some of my personal favourites and demonstrate Scarlatti's very varied and innovative compositions. He presents an extremely wide range of musical expression, often showing the strong influence of Spanish folk music such as in [12] *D major K492* where imitations of guitar strumming, and dramatic changes of key and mood are apparent. Tracks [11] the *D major K491* and [16] *E major K380* have a ceremonial character that calls to mind bands of musicians accompanying a religious procession, where heavy effigies of the Madonna and saints are carried through the streets. In [16] the drums and trumpets are especially evident, with the insistent fervour of the drummer dominating sections of the piece. In [11] long pauses suggest the bearers stopping for a rest then starting again with a startling change of theme and key. The *D minor Gavota, K64* [13] begins as a typically Baroque dance with the Spanish influence emerging in the accompanying crushed dissonant chords.

In [3] *C major K461* Scarlatti's outer sections are based largely on exercises for contrary motion scales and other passage work, but the middle section changes into G minor and foreshadows a romanticism heard much later in composers such as Dussek. The *E minor K198* [8] begins as if it were a two-part invention in the manner

of Bach, but continues with the characteristic repeated patterns so evident in many of the sonatas.

All the sonatas have their technical challenges – for instance cross-hand playing in the [1] *B minor K27*, [5] *A minor K54*, [14] *F# minor K25* and especially in [6] the *A major K113* where Scarlatti uses extremely rapid left cross-hand leaps over the whole compass of the keyboard. In [2] *F minor K466*, [7] *F minor K481* and [9] *A major K208*, he demands a sustained melodic line giving us the character of an aria invoking sadness and beauty. Tracks [9] and [10], both in A major, make an attractive pair; [10] *K209*, with its joyous and light hearted mood, a contrast after the previous sonata's aria. The only sonata in which I do not play the second section repeat is [2] *F minor K466*. Having made the emotional journey through the piece, I intuitively feel a disinclination to restart the second section. It was the custom of the time to play the repeats, and perhaps on a harpsichord, without the extra emotional impact of dynamics, one would feel it to be more appropriate.

The *Essercizi* included here are [1] *B minor K27*, [4] *D minor K1*, [14] *F# minor K25* and [15] *D minor K9*. [15] has a gentle pastoral lilt and is adorned by repeated bird-like trills. In [1] and [14] I especially enjoy Scarlatti's use of repeated patterns to build up the tension, culminating in an exhilarating fulfilment of the phrase. In the preface of the first edition of the *Essercizi*, Scarlatti wrote, "*Reader, whether you be dilettante or professor... show yourself to be more human than critical, and then your pleasure will increase.*"

Joanna Leach

Stodart square piano of 1823

There are many fine recordings of Scarlatti, played both on the harpsichord and the modern piano. Obviously, interpretation is to some extent influenced by the instrument, its own possibilities and characteristics.

An early 19th century piano brings its own completely different range of colours and voices to the music. Since it was not my intention to attempt to imitate the very early pianos that Scarlatti may have used, I chose the 1823 Stodart with its ability to produce a vibrant tone and wide dynamic range that was typical of the pianos in the 1800s.

The square piano was essentially a domestic instrument, the tone and dynamic admirably suited to the drawing room, giving music performed on such a piano an intimacy and immediacy almost impossible to imagine on a "modern" instrument. That having been said, it is astonishing how large a room a square piano can fill with sound. The concert hall, holding an audience of many hundreds, was still well in the future, so there was not yet the need to build an instrument with the capabilities of filling such a space.

The sound of a well restored early piano still has subtle reminders of the harpsichord timbre, and indeed, it is possible to hear echoes of the guitar-like tones which must have inspired some of Scarlatti's work. The iron and brass strings, the small but very resonant soundboard and the leather covered hammers all contribute to this evocative tone world which is so well suited to the music of Scarlatti. Of course, the same music can be (and indeed is) successfully played on a modern instrument, but has a very different "flavour" and must be further from the sounds which would have been familiar to the composer.

Joanna Leach/ Andrew Lancaster

Joanna Leach

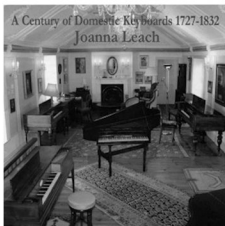
When Joanna Leach inherited a Clementi square piano in 1987, it was out of curiosity and for its historical interest that she decided to have it restored. It was during her quest for an expert restorer that she met Andrew Lancaster. Until then she had played modern pianos, giving recitals at the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, St. John's Smith Square and the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest both as soloist and chamber musician. Joanna studied piano with Joseph Dichler in Vienna during the mid 1950s and later in London with Peter Katin.

Having only experienced square pianos in poor condition or badly restored, it had never occurred to her that she would actually prefer playing works of classical and early romantic composers on original period pianos. Through her connection with Andrew Lancaster, Joanna had the opportunity to play a range of period pianos after they were restored and she became increasingly fascinated with the influence that the pianos imposed on a player's performance by their inherent characteristics.

As a result of this growing passion for square pianos, the ATHENE label was born in 1991. It was launched with a recording of the ***John Field Nocturnes*** (ATHCD1) played on three different square pianos of Field's period. The disc was well received by critics among whom, Dr. Peter Grahame-Woolf for *Classical Music on the Web* wrote, "I would urge readers to listen to Joanna Leach's recording of John Field nocturnes on square pianos - it might change their lives!" Joanna's playing has received most favorable reviews in *Penguin Guide to Compact Discs* and *Gramophone Good CD Guide* among others.

Although her playing and recording activities have been seriously restricted by illness over the last five years, Joanna is determined to complete her various musical projects and still enjoys giving the occasional recital on the square piano in small venues where the intimate sound of the instrument is best appreciated.

Mike Beville



ATH 23026

A Century of Domestic Keyboards 1727-1832

*Barton Spinnet 1727, Longman & Broderip 1787,
Stodart 1823, Clementi 1832*

*Couperin, Byrd, Handel, Bach, Soler, Mozart,
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"Joanna Leach's playing is intimate, stylish and pleasantly unassuming." –
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*"Leach's performances are first-rate, stylish and alert, with impeccably pointed ornaments.
Highly recommended: domestic instruments they may be, but they are of a quality and
character which is remarkable to hear."* - Nicholas Salwey (International Record Review)

An ATHENE recording

Producer: Joanna Leach

Engineer: Mike Beville

Piano Tuning: Martin Ness (pitch: A=415Hz)

Cover painting of Joanna Leach by Gavin Bird

Tracks 5, 6 and 16 recorded on 2 December 1997

Tracks 1, 7 and 14 recorded on 28 July 1999

All at Felden Street, Fulham, London.

Tracks 4 and 15 recorded on 21 June 2001

All other tracks recorded on 9 and 10 February, 2006

All at Shute House, Devon.

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[8]

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Recordings by Joanna Leach on square pianos

23001 (ATHCD1)

“Three Square” : John Field Nocturnes

Broadwood 1823, D’Almaine 1835, Stodart 1823

“Leach coaxes poetic sounds and plays this repertoire very sensitively”

- Penguin Guide to Compact Discs



23002 (ATHCD2)

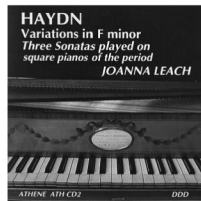
Haydn: Four Sonatas & Variations in F minor

Astor c.1800, Broadwood 1789,

Longman & Broperip 1787, Stodart 1823

“...the result is deceptively seductive and engrossing. Lovingly played...simply magical.”

- Penguin Guide to Compact Discs



23003 (ATHCD3)

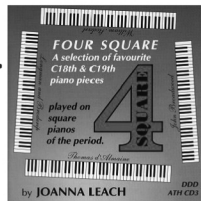
“Four Square”: recital – Chopin, Schubert, Soler, etc.

Broadwood 1789, D’Almaine 1835,

Longman & Broderip 1787, Stodart 1823

“There is no more convincing fortepiano recital than this.”

- Penguin Guide to Compact Discs



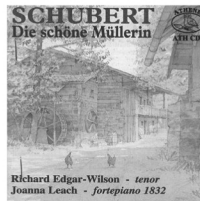
23006 (ATHCD6)

Schubert: Die Schöne Müllerin

Clementi 1832 (with Richard Edgar-Wilson, tenor)

"it is rare that a singer can cope with the technical demands, and yet still sound so convincingly surprised by the turn of events"

- Early Music Review



23010 (ATHCD10)

Dussek: Duos Concertants for harp and fortepiano

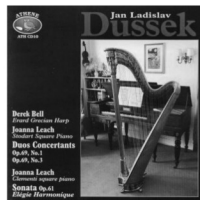
Stodart 1823 (with Derek Bell, Erard harp)

Piano Sonata : Élégie Harmonique

Clementi 1832

"The playing is excellent throughout..." - Early Music Review.

"...Meisterliche..." - Harper Piano Magazine

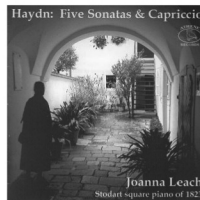


23022 (ATHCD22)

Haydn: Five Sonatas & Capriccio

Stodart 1823

"One cannot but enjoy this disc." - Kirk McElhearn (MusicWeb)





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