

Enrique Igoa

The First Recordings of the Soler

Sonatas in Ms. Cary 703



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ABSTRACT

The Ms. Cary 703, purchased by the Morgan Library of New York, has revealed a few of unknown sonatas attributed to Domenico Scarlatti, as well as 29 unknown sonatas by Antonio Soler. The edition of these sonatas prepared by Takanao Todoroki was uploaded in 2014 to Academia, and there has been ample time since then for three players to make recordings of these sonatas, either on compact disk or on video, making available the first complete world recordings of all 29 sonatas in October 2020.

Five people from four countries on three continents (Asia, Europe, America) have been involved in this totally unplanned but exciting project: the editor of the sonatas Takanao Todoroki (Fukuoka, Kyushu Island, Japan); the Spanish harpsichordist Diego Ares, who recorded the first CD (Basel, Switzerland); the writer of this paper, Enrique Igoa (Madrid, Spain); and the two US harpsichordists who recorded the videos, Rebecca Pechefsky (Brooklyn, New York) and Ryan Layne Whitney (Seattle, Washington). In this way, Soler's music has traveled a long way from the western Pacific, through central and southern Europe, to the other side of the Atlantic, jumping in turn from the east to the west coast of the United States.

KEY WORDS

Antonio Soler; Domenico Scarlatti; Sonata; Sonata Theory; 18th Century Iberian Keyboard Music; Harpsichord.

1. The Manuscript¹

The recent purchase (2011) by the Mary Cary Foundation for the Morgan Library of New York of a manuscript with music dated in or around 1756 – presumably copied a few years later or in the last third of the 18th century – and found in Majorca (Balearic Islands, Spain), named as Ms. Cary 703, is a great discovery for Iberian keyboard music. Its content, divided in two sections, alternates in each section between sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti – who was to die a year later – and Antonio Soler – who was beginning his job as choirmaster in El Escorial.

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¹ For full information about this manuscript, its origin, its content, and an analytical and stylistic survey of the Soler sonatas see Enrique Igoa (2020): “The New Sonatas of Antonio Soler in Ms. Cary 703: An Analytical and Stylistic Survey”. Academia.edu.

It has 171 pages, and contains two series of sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti and Antonio Soler. The volume was apparently copied in Spain (presumably in or around Madrid) by different hands, and possibly at different periods. An important part of the score could have been copied around 1756 or shortly after, which gives the manuscript a priceless value, since in that year Scarlatti was still alive, and Soler was beginning to compose his first sonatas.

In the first section (Ff. 1r-117r), after several sonatas by Scarlatti (some of them not identified), appear 26 sonatas of Soler (Ff. 90v-117r), a few of them already known from other manuscripts and cataloged by Samuel Rubio (*Sonatas No. 7, 14, 35, 42, 43 and 87*), but the remaining 20 absolutely unknown. The second section (Ff. 117v-170r) presents a new set of sonatas by Scarlatti (almost all of them identified) and another group of 17 sonatas by Soler (Ff. 153v-170r), some of them also known from other manuscripts (*Sonatas No. 12, 13, 84, 85, 86, 90, 108 and 117*), but the remaining 9 still not identified. According to this, in the manuscript there are in total 43 sonatas by Soler (29 of them unidentified), which may well be copies of some of the early works included in the volume of sonatas that Soler carried to Montserrat as a proof of his skill when he came back to Olot in 1761, as can be read in the biography included in my PhD dissertation (Igoa 2014: 62).²

Ms. Cary 703 – Morgan Library of New York			
Todoroki/Igoa Rubio	Ares	Key	Recording
161 / 162	A30/ A 31	D major	Diego Ares
117 / 164	A40 / A38	D minor/major	“
167 / 168	A42 / A43	A flat major	“
169 / 7	A1 / A2	C major	“
174 / 175	A7 / A8	A major	“
176 / 177	A11/ A12	B flat major	“
178 / 179	A13 / A14	F minor	“
180 / 181	A15 / A16	C major	“
182 / 183	A17 / A18	A minor	“
187 / 188	A25 / A26	B minor	“
165 / 166	A41 / A39	A major	Rebecca Pechefsky
170 / 171	A3 / A4	D minor	“
176 / 177	A11 / A12	B flat major	“
184 / 185	A19 / A20	E minor	“
160	A28	G minor	Ryan Layne Whitney
163	A34	G major	“
117 / 164	A40 / A38	D minor/major	“
172 / 173	A5 / A6	C major	“
182	A17	A minor	“
186	A21	G major	“
187 / 188	A25 / A26	B minor	“

Table 1 Recordings of the sonatas from Ms. Cary 703
(Date: October 2020).

² Enrique Igoa (2014). *La cuestión de la forma en las sonatas de Antonio Soler*. PhD dissertation. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

All the sonatas show a homogeneous style, almost always binary sonatas (just two of them are mixed sonata and one is sonata form), with balanced proportions between the two parts and a language very close to Scarlatti in many ways. Many of them – as in the sonatas of the Neapolitan – begin with the typical imitative procedure of a motif exposed by the right hand which then returns in the left hand. A detailed analysis of each of the sonatas can be found in the Appendix of the aforementioned paper about the Ms. Cary 703, including a thematic, harmonic, and formal scheme, a summary table of the different categories and procedures, as well as a specific comment.

These 29 sonatas were numbered by Takanao Todoroki in his edition³ from No. 160 to No. 188, following the numbers employed by Samuel Rubio and Enrique Igoa in their editions. Diego Ares provides a specific number for the 43 sonatas of this manuscript: both series of numbers are shown in **Table 1**.

2. The recordings

2.1. Diego Ares

The first recording chronologically is a CD played by Spanish harpsichordist Diego Ares on a harpsichord by Joel Katzman (Amsterdam, 2009) after a Sevillian harpsichord attributed to Francisco Pérez Mirabal (1734). The label is Harmonia Mundi, and the reference is HMC 902232 (Austria, 2015). It includes the sonatas shown in **Table 1**, as well as some shorter pieces by Soler and other authors. As can be seen, all the sonatas are recorded in pairs, in the same way they appear in the manuscript, to show the original grouping planned – at least in theory – by the composer himself. Eight of these pairs contain totally new sonatas: *Sonatas No. 161/162*, *Sonatas No. 167/168*, *Sonatas No. 174/175*, *Sonatas No. 176/177*, *Sonatas No. 178/179*, *Sonatas No. 180/181*, *Sonatas No. 182/183* and *Sonatas No. 187/188*. Two more pairs are composed of one new and one previously known sonata, which in this manuscript appear grouped in other ways: *Sonatas No. 117/164* and *Sonatas No. 169/7*. I will come back below to the *Sonata No. 117* when discussing the video recordings.

The next two recordings were made by the Brooklyn (New York, USA) harpsichordist Rebecca Pechefsky and by the Seattle (Washington, USA) harpsichordist Ryan Layne Whitney, and were released as videos recorded in home studios, due to circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. They were uploaded to YouTube between May and September 2020. Many of these recordings were made – as Diego Ares did – according to the pairings of sonatas in the manuscript, i.e., preserving the grouping of two sonatas in the same key (sometimes changing from minor to major mode) copied one after another, but there are also recordings of single sonatas belonging to established pairs or with doubtful grouping.

³ Antonio Soler. *29 New Sonatas* (Ms. Cary 703 from the Morgan Library of New York). Takanao Todoroki (ed.). Academia.edu, 2014.

2.2. Rebecca Pechefsky

Rebecca Pechefsky uploaded seven videos between May and September 2020, all of them – along with her former recordings of *Sonata No. 118* and *Sonatas No. 24/25* – included in a playlist in the QuillClassics channel, devoted mostly to ancient music:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLkWklUUqkWK4MmpDjMDXOyZUXvrHthYqS>

Six of these videos are devoted to single pieces: *Sonatas No. 165, 166, 170, 171, 176* and *177* (see **Table 2**), but all of them are members of a pair of sonatas in the same key, as can be seen in **Table 1** (*Sonatas No. 165/166* in A major; *Sonatas No. 170/171* in D minor; and *Sonatas No. 176/177* in B flat major). The other video features a full pair consisting of *Sonatas No. 184/185* in E minor. One of the grouped pair of sonatas – *Sonatas No. 176/177* – has also been recorded previously by Diego Ares on his CD, which provides us with two versions of the same group.

Sonatas	Link
<i>Sonata No. 165</i>	https://youtu.be/uIqIM6WwTIs
<i>Sonata No. 166</i>	https://youtu.be/CldfiTrsFxl
<i>Sonata No. 170</i>	https://youtu.be/bfE4UMACHUI
<i>Sonata No. 171</i>	https://youtu.be/DU9YRbDsbuM
<i>Sonata No. 176</i>	https://youtu.be/5Ewx1Yeh5PA
<i>Sonata No. 177</i>	https://youtu.be/UOp0GsLHVko
<i>Sonatas No. 184/185</i>	https://youtu.be/z-a7Tjql2mE

Table 2 Links to the videos played by Rebecca Pechefsky.

2.3. Ryan Layne Whitney

Ryan Layne Whitney uploaded both paired sonatas as well as single sonatas, all released between May and September 2020 (see **Table 3**). The paired pieces are: *Sonatas No. 117/164* in D minor/major, *Sonatas No. 172/173* in C major, and *Sonatas No. 187/188* in B minor. As can be seen, four of these six sonatas were also recorded by Diego Ares, which again provides two versions of these works. In the case of the pair of *Sonatas No. 117/164* – as I pointed out when listing the recordings of Diego Ares – the first piece of the pair was a previously known sonata, numbered by Samuel Rubio as R. 117, and published in his edition (1972) according to another source, a manuscript copied at the beginning of the 20th century.⁴ This edition has been used by several players in their recordings (Bob van Asperen, Gilbert Rowland). For this reason it is

⁴ For more details concerning the editions of the sonatas of Antonio Soler and the technical and musical problems around them see Enrique Igoa (2012): *20 Sonatas de Antonio Soler*. Valencia: Editorial Piles.

very interesting to have the same work played from the new Cary 703 source, which presents some differences from the previous manuscript.

The single works recorded by Ryan Layne Whitney are *Sonatas No. 160, 163, 182, and 186*. As can be seen in **Table 2** of the paper about the Ms. Cary 703 (Igoa 2020: 13), *Sonata No. 160* is followed in this source by the previously known *Sonata No. 12*, and *Sonata No. 163* is followed by the previously known *Sonata No. 13*. But *Sonatas No. 12/13/14* form a group of three sonatas in the same key in another source, the Birchall edition of 1796, apparently ordered by Soler himself in 1772 as a gift to Lord Fitzwilliam. Since the Ms. Cary 703 seems to contain almost exclusively the earlier sonatas of Soler, it is likely he took some of those sonatas to complete the manuscript for Lord Fitzwilliam, although in doing so he altered the original pairing of the sonatas (Igoa 2020: 11). *Sonata No. 182* is paired in the Ms. Cary 703 with *Sonata No. 183*, and in this way is recorded by Diego Ares, so again we have two versions of one single work, in this case, *Sonata No. 182*. *Sonata 186*, finally, is paired in the manuscript with the previously known *Sonata No. 43*, already included by Bob van Asperen and Gilbert Rowland in their recordings.

Sonatas	Link
<i>Sonata No. 160</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roodcIB8qIk
<i>Sonata No. 163</i>	https://youtu.be/RSFIS7NTcEs
<i>Sonatas No. 117/164</i>	https://youtu.be/CCleucFD67U
<i>Sonatas No. 172/173</i>	https://youtu.be/UCKdCA9A56Q
<i>Sonata No. 182</i>	https://youtu.be/zgXvwmR7vj0
<i>Sonata No. 186</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M8RAgH6r-g
<i>Sonatas No. 187/188</i>	https://youtu.be/CJFLPa2uzuw

Table 3 Links to the videos played by Ryan Layne Whitney.

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