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Domenico Scarlatti: The Beginnings and Creation of the Classical Piano Sonata

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THE BEGINNINGS AND CREATION OF
THE CLASSICAL PIANO SONATA

Domenico
Scarlatti

Presented by Megan Stuart
THESIS:

Domenico Scarlatti helped develop the Classical sonata and that development is seen in Scarlatti's personal history, his influences, and the elements used within his sonatas that became common for the eventual form of the sonata.
BEGINNINGS OF SCARLATTI

• Born on October 26, 1684 in Naples, Italy
• Father was Alessandro Scarlatti, well known for his contribution to opera
• Gained most of his music education from father and family
• Moved to Venice to begin career
• Moved to London to study with Handel
• Final move to Lisbon solidifies career
• King Juan V looking for a music master for Princess Maria Barbara
• Harpsichord sonatas were written for lessons with the princess
• Esercizi, 'exercises'
• Bulk of Scarlatti's compositions come from his time in Spain
• He stayed with the royal family until retirement in 1754
• Spent majority of life and career in Spain
Influences

1. **ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI**
   First forty years of Domenico's life was influenced by Alessandro. His family was also an influence in his development as a musician.

2. **FELLOW COMPOSERS**
   Handel, Corelli, Princess Maria Barbara, Thomas Roseingrave, Pasquini, Gasparini, Vivaldi, and Marcellos.

3. **ENVIRONMENT**
   Due to the traveling he did with the royal family, Scarlatti mimicked his surroundings and the sounds he heard.

4. **OTHER INSTRUMENTS**
   Spanish guitar being the biggest influence, other instruments found in European orchestra and common instruments of Spain.
Example:
SONATA NO. 449
GUITAR INFLUENCE

Example:

EXAMPLE OF PUNTEADO STYLE
(Mm. 10 - 12)

Scarlatti, Domenico. Sonata in F Major K. 239 (Alexandre Tharaud).
YouTube Video, 3:46, January 11, 2019,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQ9qO83rCCg
Form of Classical Sonata

As seen in Mozart and Haydn's Sonatas

- **Exposition**
  - A
  - trans.
  - B

- **Development**
  - working out &
  - introducing material

- **Recapitulation**
  - A
  - trans.
  - B

**Major key**:
- I: mod. V
- unstable: I

**Minor key**:
- i: mod. III
- unstable: i
Scarlatti's Sonata

TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS

ONE MOVEMENT
Binary form of the older form. A :|| B A' :||

FIRST THEME
Seen in every Scarlatti Sonata.

SECOND THEME
A second theme is seen in only a few of his sonatas.

THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT
Thematic development has a different look in Scarlatti's sonatas.

DEVELOPING IDEAS
Scarlatti develops ideas as he writes in an almost improvisatory style.

Domenico Scarlatti: Piano Sonata
DEVICES USED

DEVICES SCARLATTI USED IN COMPOSITION PROCESS

- Altering Figures
- Imitation
- Thin Texture
- Chordal Bass
- Chromatic Passages
FINAL THOUGHTS

SCARLATTI'S INFLUENCE

• Through performance of his sonatas his ideas spread
• His pieces were used in learning the harpsichord
• At the tail-end of Classical period, he was pushing towards new ideas that eventually became popular
• His techniques are seen in Mozart's and Haydn's sonatas